# THE ADVENT

Vol. IX. No. 3 August 1952

*A Quarterly Devoted to the Exposition of Sri Aurobindo's Vision of the Future*

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# *The Advent*

The Divine is everywhere and in everything, the Divine is everything; true, in His Essence and Supreme Reality. But in this world of progressive material manifestation one must identify with the Divine, not as He is, but as He will be.

THE MOTHER

# The ADVENT

August 1952

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Thy soul has strength and needs no other guide
Than One who burns within thy bosom's powers.....
He who shall walk until thy body's end
A close-bound traveller pacing with thy pace,
The lyrist of thy soul's most intimate chords
Who shall give voice to what in thee is mute.

*Savitri,* Book IV, Canto 3 — Sri Aurobindo

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# THE ADVENT

The Divine gives itself to those who give themselves without reserve and in all their parts to the Divine. For them the calm, the light, the power, the bliss, the freedom, the wideness, the heights of knowledge, the seas of Ananda. - - - - - *Sri Aurobindo.*

## EDITORIALS*

### EVER GREEN!

WHEN you have an inner experience, there is a natural tendency in you to have it again, to repeat it, and to repeat it, you go by the same way and in the same manner. When you sit in meditation, for example, you withdraw yourself from outward contacts and enter into a condition with which you have become familiar, which has pleased you and which you consider sufficiently high and a commendable poise of consciousness. Thus whenever you sit down to meditation, you forthwith get into your habitual condition automatically, without any effort and you remain there as long as you like. Evidently, the experience has become a matter of habit i.e. mechanical and lifeless, but you do not perceive it, you have become so unconscious. That means you do not progress any more, you have shut yourself, as it were, in a closed box. If you continue, you may do so your whole life in that way, but you will not have advanced a single step; on the contrary, you will have regressed a good deal.

The great secret of progress—and also of permanent youthfulness—is to feel at every moment that you are just beginning your life and your life-

* Based on Mother's Talks

experience. Always you start afresh; even if you are on the same path and seem to be moving in the same direction for the hundredth time, you must feel as if it was for the first time that you undertook the journey, it was your virgin attempt towards a new discovery. Forget all past ideas, notions, experiences that crowd your mind; sweep away all the accumulated dust that has cumbered your brain; make your consciousness as clean and clear as that of a newborn babe—all straightened out, with none of the convolutions and wrinkles of an aged cerebrum. Always you will come into contact with world and things in all the simplicity and spontaneity of pure consciousness and always world and things will bring to you its unending wonder and beauty and truth.

Whenever you go inside and seek your poise, do not look for your old acquaintances, the familiar experiences, do not carry upon your back the load of the past, but go ahead, as if through a virgin tract, making quite new discoveries and opening unexpected vistas at each step. You can make an experiment even on your physical body, i.e. take the physical consciousness too to share in your adventure of ever new discovery. Thus you may, for example, forget your habit of eating or even walking, truly forget and try to learn over again, even as you did for the first time as a child. You have to acquire consciously a capacity of the body that has become an almost unconscious reflex action. It is a wonderful and exhilarating experience. Naturally you cannot repeat too often or carry too far an experiment of this kind on the physical plane. But you can freely deal with your inner life and consciousness. You can make your mind and your vital a clean slate, as much as you like: not once in your life, but every moment of your life. And then see how the world impinges upon your consciousness, what fresh discoveries and awakenings come to you endlessly! You can always rid yourself of the accustomed vibrations on the normal levels of your existence, the physical, vital and mental; and even you can go beyond your psychic formation and be the wide, the vast, the limitless, the Infinite itself, void of all name and form. And then with that virgin consciousness drop straight into the world of material life and form into your body and bodily reactions. The world will give itself up to you in its pristine purity, its original beauty and truth, always luminous and glorious. This experience has to be the normal mode of your living, not simply the culmination or acme of your being, a fixed and stagnant status even if considered the highest, the *summum bonum*. That is how you can keep yourself and the world around you ever fresh and young and new.

The preacher who speaks of the truth and delivers it to his hearers is usually effective for the first time or for a first few occasions only, when he feels the truth of his truth and is sincere while delivering. But as time wears on, his truth too wears out, for it becomes stereotyped, a matter of mere habit. The experience is no longer lived, but mechanically doled out. You are sincere only when the experience is new and fresh and living,—it should be made so every moment, otherwise it is dead letter, letter that killeth.

That is the secret of spiritual life and even of normal life. To keep it ever green you must know how to pour into it a continuous flow of new sap. Look upon yourself, look upon the world always with fresh eyes—never burdened or obscured by the scales that past experiences and acquisitions have collected. Unlearn the past, always begin from the beginning as a beginner—every moment a fresh impact, a new revelation, an unexpected opening. That is how life remains ever young and ever progressive.

## A PAGE OF OCCULT HISTORY

At the beginning of creation, four individual formations—the first personalities—made their appearance. There were: (1) a Being of Light or Consciousness, (2) a Being of Truth or Reality, (3) a Being of Love or Ananda and (4) a Being of Life. And the first law of creation was freedom of decision. These Beings were manifestations in the free movement of the Divine; they themselves moved free, according to their individualised conscious will. They stood out, as if in relief, on the background of the Divine Existence. For originally, although they differentiated themselves from each other and from the Divine, yet they formed a unified harmony and lived and moved and had their being as different members of the same divine Body. At first they stood out, but still essentially and apparently linked on to their fountain and origin. Soon, however, they stood out no longer on the Divine, but moved out of him, away and separate; they sought to fulfil their individualised will and destiny. The Divine did not impose its will or force these individualities to turn round: that would frustrate the very purpose of creation. He allowed these independent beings to enjoy their full independence, although they were born out of him and essential part and parcel of his own being. They went abroad on a journey of adventure, each carving out its own line of growth and fulfilment. The first fruit, the inevitable reaction of freedom was precisely, as is just said, a separation from the Divine, each one encircled within its ego, limited and bound to its own fund

of potency: individualism means limitation. Now, once separated, the connection with the source snapped, that is to say in the outward activity, in dynamic movement or becoming (not in essential being), the Four Independents lapsed into their opposites: Light changed to Darkness, i.e. consciousness to unconsciousness, Truth changed to Falsehood, Delight changed to Pain and Suffering, and Life changed to Death. That is how the four undivine principles, the Powers of the Undivine came to rule and fashion the material creation.

Into the heart of this Darkness and Falsehood and Pain and Death, a seed was sown, a grain that is to be the epitome and symbol of material creation and in and through which the Divine will claim back all the elements gone astray, the prodigal ones who will return to recognise and fulfil the Divine. That was Earth. And the earth, in her turn, in her labour towards the Divine Fulfilment, out of her bosom, threw up a being who would again symbolise and epitomise the earth and material creation. That is Man. For, man came with the soul in him, the Psychic Being, the Divine Flame, the spark of consciousness in the midst of universal unconsciousness, a miniature of the original Divine Light-Truth-Love-Life. In the meantime, to help the evolution, to join hands with the aspiring soul in the human being, there was created, on the defection of the First Lords—the Asuric Quaternity—a second hierarchy of luminous beings—Devas, gods. (Something of this inner history of the world is reflected in the Greek legend of struggle between the Titans and the Olympians.) These gods, however, being a posterior creation, perhaps because they were young and inexperienced, could not cope immediately with their strong Elders. It is why we see in the mythological legends the gods very often worsted at the hands of the Asuras, Indra hiding under the sea, Zeus threatened often with defeat and disaster. It is only an intervention from the Supreme (the Greek called it Fate) that saved them in the end and restored the balance.

However, the Asuras came to think better of the game and consented to use their freedom on the side of the Divine, for the fulfilment of the Divine; that is to say, they agreed to conversion. Thus they took birth as or in human beings, so that they may be in contact with the human soul —Psyche—which is the only door or passage to the Divine in this material world. But the matter was not easy; the process was not straight. For, even agreeing to be converted, even basking in the sunshine of the human psychic, these incorrigible Elders could not forget or wholly give up their old habit and nature. They now wanted to work for the Divine Fulfilment

in order to magnify themselves thereby; they consented to serve the Divine in order to make the Divine serve them, utilise the Divine End for their own purposes. They wished to see the new creation after their own heart's desire.

That is how things have become difficult upon earth and are delaying the ultimate consummation which, however, is sure to come about when the wheel of Time or Fate has turned full circle.

---

Men are still in love with grief; when they see one who is too high for grief or joy, they curse him and cry, "O thou insensible!" Therefore Christ still hangs on the cross in Jerusalem.

Men are in love with sin; when they see one who is too high for vice or virtue, they curse him and cry, "O thou breaker of bonds, thou wicked and immoral one!" Therefore Sri Krishna does not live as yet in Brindaban.

* * *

Sometimes one is led to think that only those things really matter which have never happened; for beside them most historic achievements seem almost pale and ineffective.

There are four great events in history, the siege of Troy, the life and crucifixion of Christ, the exile of Krishna in Brindaban and the colloquy with Arjuna on the battlefield of Kurukshetra. The siege of Troy created Hellas, the exile in Brindaban created devotional religion, (for before there was only meditation and worship), Christ from his Cross humanised Europe, the colloquy at Kurukshetra will yet liberate humanity.

Yet it is said that none of these four events ever happened.

SRI AUROBINDO

## SYMBOL MOON

ONCE again thou hast climbed, O moon, like a white fire on the glimmering edge,
Floating up, floating up from the haunted verge of a foam-tremulous sea.
Mystic-horned here crossing the grey-hued listless nights and days,
Spirit-silver craft from the ports of eternity.

Dumbly blithe, shuddering, the air is filled from thy cup of pale mysterious wine:
Gleam quivers to longing gleam; and the faery torches lit for Night's mysteries set in her niches stark and deep;
The inconscient gulfs stir and are vaguely thrilled and, while their unheard voices cry to the Wonder-light new-seen
Till descending its ray shall unlock with a[1] wizard rod of fire the dumb recesses of sleep.

Overhead with thy plunging and swaying prow thou fleetest, O ship of the gods,
Glorifying the clouds with thy halo, but our hearts with a rose-red rapture shed from the secret breasts of love;
Almost thou seemest the very bliss that floats in opaline air over heaven's golden roads,
Embodied here to capture our human lives like a nectar face of light in the doubtful blue above.

Bright and alone in a white-foam-glinted delicate dim-blue ocean of sky,
Ever thou run'st and thou floatest as a magic drifting bowl

[1] its

## SYMBOL MOON

Flung by the hand of a drunken god in the river of Time goes tossing by,
O icon and chalice of spiritual light whose spots are like Nature's
shadow stains on a white and immaculate soul.

How like one frail and hunted thou com'st O white moon, at my lonely
call from thy deep sky-covert heights,
A voyager carrying through the myriad-isled archipelago of the spear-
pointed questioning stars
The circle of the occult argent Yes of the Invisible to the dim query of the
yearning witness lights
That burn in the dense vault of Matter's waking mind—innumerable,
solitary and sparse.

A disk of a greater Ray that shall come, a white-fire rapture and girdling
rose of love,
Timelessly thou driftest, O silver boat that set out from the far
Unknown,
Moon-crystal of silver or gold of some spirit joy spun by Time in his dense
aeonic groove,
A messenger and bearer of an unembodied beauty and unseized bliss
advancing over our life's wan sea—significant, bright and alone.

SRI AUROBINDO

# HYMN TO INDRA*

*(Hymn of Brihaduktha Vamadevya to Indra, Master of Mental Force, when he exceeded Mind and entered Mahas, yet maintained the lower firmaments,—realising his unity with Sah the supreme Purusha.)*

1. When thou hadst given wholly the fullness of the ideal to thy fame, O Maghavan of the fullness, when both the firmaments cried to thee in their terror, thou didst protect the gods, thou didst transfix the Enemy, by teaching the strength of the Spirit, O Indra, even for this creation.

2. When thou didst range abroad increasing in thy force of substance and progressing strength to the peoples, that force was sufficient for thy battles of which they tell, but for thee, thou knowest today no enemy nor before thou knewest.

3. Who were the sages before us that came to the end of thy greatness equal-souled? Didst thou not give being to thy father and thy mother together out of thine own body?

4. Four, verily, are thy untameable mightinesses when thou dwellest in the Vastness; all of them thou knowest and by them thou hast done thy works, O Maghavan.

5. Thou holdest all these that are absolute existences, thou makest known the objects that are hidden in the Secret Places of Being; smite not asunder my desire, O Maghavan, thou art he that commands it and thou art he that giveth.

6. He who placed light in the heart of other light and joined sweetnesses to sweetness, to that Indra this love, this force, this thought was spoken from Brihaduktha when he fulfilled in himself the Brahman.

SRI AUROBINDO

* Rig Veda X. 54

THE psychic when sufficiently developed can be strong enough to make the preliminary clearance.

It is the supramental alone that can transform the material being, but the physical mind and the physical vital can be very much changed by the action of the psychic and of the Overmind. The entire change however is made only when there is the supramental influence. But for the present the psychic is the force that may be relied on for the preliminary purification of the lower nature.

17-3-1933

* * *

Nothing permanent can be done without the real Supramental Force. But the result of its descent would be that in human life intuition would become a greater and more developed force than it now is and the other intermediate powers between mind and Supermind would become also more common and develop an organised action.

5-5-1933

* * *

A heat is sometimes created in the body by the pressure of a Force of *tapas* because there are things that resist in the vital or in the body habit or in the brain-mind,—the cause of the heat is therefore not the force itself but the resistance. As soon as the system is cleared there is no sense of heat any longer. But this heat is clearly distinguishable from illness.

24-3-1933

* * *

It is not the psychic but the mind that gets raised and transformed and and its action intensified by the intuitivising of the consciousness. The

psychic is always the same in essence and adapts its action without need of transformation to any change of consciousness.

24-3-1933

* * *

It is better to proceed by a quiet rejection and growth in consciousness —and not invite battle—though, if a struggle is forced on you you must meet it with calm and courage.

24-3-1933

* * *

No, the intuitive self is quite different, or rather the intuitive consciousness that is somewhere above the mind. The psychic stands behind the being —a simple and sincere devotion to the Divine, single-hearted and immediate sense of what is right and helps towards the Truth and the Divine, an instinctive withdrawal from all that is the opposite are its most visible characteristics.

16-2-1933

* * *

No, without sadhana the object of Yoga cannot be attained. Work itsel must be taken as part of sadhana. But naturally when you are working, you must think of the work, which you will learn to do from the Yogic Consciousness as an instrument and with the memory of the Divine.

16-2-1933

* * *

You forget that men differ in nature and therefore each will approach the sadhana in his own way—one through work, one through bhakti, one through meditation and knowledge—and those who are capable of it, through all together. You are perfectly justified in following your own way, whatever may be the theories of others—but let them follow theirs. In the end all can converge together towards the same goal.

4-4-1933

* * *

There is no such thing as a mere accident. There is some—perhaps a very slight—unconsciousness in the physical and it is taken advantage of by these small beings of the vital physical plane—who are more mischievous than consciously hostile.

6-4-1933

* * *

Yes, if there is the solid experience, the ego habit is much diminished, but it does not go altogether. It takes refuge in the sense of being an instrument and—if there is not the psychic turn—it may easily prefer to be the instrument of some force that feeds the satisfaction of the ego. In such cases the ego may still remain strong although it feels itself instrumental and not the primary actor.

12-4-1933

* * *

Egoism is part of the machinery— a chief part—of universal Nature, first to develop individuality out of indiscriminate force and substance of Nature and secondly, to make the individual (through the machinery of egoistic thought, feeling, will and desire) a tool of the universal forces. It is only when one gets into touch with a higher Nature that it is possible to get free of this rule of ego and subjection to these forces.

26-4-1933

* * *

The lesser forces of Light are usually too much insistent on "seeking" for Truth to make effectivity their logic or their rule—the hostiles are too pragmatic to care for Truth, they want only success. As for the greater forces (e.g. Overmind), they are dynamic and try always to make consciousness effective, but they insist on consciousness, while the hostiles care nothing for that—the more unconscious you are and their automatic tool the better they are pleased—for it is unconsciousness that gives them their chance.

15-4-1933

* * *

Yes. The earth is the place of evolution in which all these forces meet and try to manifest and out of their working something has to develop.

On the other planes (the mental, vital etc.) there is not the evolution—there each acts separately according to its own law.

26-4-1933

* * *

There is no fear in the higher Nature. Fear is a creation of the vital plane, an instinct of the ignorance, a sense of danger with a violent vital reaction, that replaces and usually prevents or distorts the intelligence of things. It might almost be considered as an invention of the hostile forces.

* * *

The subconscient is to be penetrated by the light and made a sort of bedrock of truth, a store of right impressions, right physical responses to the Truth. Strictly speaking it will not be subconscient at all, but a sort of bank of true values held ready for use.

1-5-1933

* * *

There are always two methods of living in the Supreme. One is to withdraw away the participation of the consciousness from things altogether and go so much inwards as to be separated from existence and live in contact with that which is beyond. The other is to get to that which is the true Essence of all things, not allowing oneself to be absorbed and entangled by the external forms, desire, attachment, slavery to the attractions of the external sense, which are the chief obstacles to this movement—so in either way they have to be got rid of. But it is quite possible to see the Supreme before the attraction of external sense is gone—only one cannot live securely in it if there is desire and external attachment because that is always taking one away from the inner poise.

7-5-1933

SRI AUROBINDO

# PHILOSOPHY OF THE UPANISHADS *

## IV

### Maya: The Principle of Phenomenal Existence

BRAHMAN then, let us suppose, has projected in Itself this luminous shadow of Itself and has in the act (speaking always in the language of finite beings with its perpetual taint of Time, Space and Causality) begun to envisage Itself and consider Its essentialities in the light of attributes. He who is Existence, Consciousness, Bliss envisages Himself as existent, conscious, blissful. From that moment phenomenal manifestation becomes inevitable; the Unqualified chooses to regard Himself as qualified. Once this fundamental condition is granted, everything else follows by the rigorous logic of evolution; it is the one postulate which Vedanta demands. For this postulate once granted, we can see how the Absolute when it projects in itself this luminous Shadow called the Parabrahman, prepares the way for and as it were necessitates the evolution of this manifest world,—by bringing into play the great fundamental principle of Maya or Illusion. Under the play of that one principle translating itself into motion, the great transformation spoken of by the Upanishad becomes possible,—the One becomes the Many.

(But this one fundamental postulate is not easily conceived. The question which will at once spring up armed and gigantic in the European mind is the teleological objection, Why? All action implies a purpose; with what purpose did Brahman regard Himself as qualified? All Evolution is prompted by a desire, implies development, moves to an intelligible goal. What did Brahman who, being Absolute, is self-sufficing, desire, of what development did He stand in need or to what goal does He move? This is, from the teleological standpoint, the great crux of any theory of the Universe which tries

* From Old Writings

to start from an essential and original Unity; a gulf is left which the intellect finds it impossible to bridge. Certain philosophies do indeed attempt to bridge it by a teleological explanation. The Absolute One, it is argued, passes through the cycle of manifestation, because He then returns to His original unity *enriched* with a new store of experiences and impressions, richer in love, richer in knowledge, richer in deed. It is truly amazing that any minds should be found which can seriously flatter themselves with the serene illusion that this is philosophy. Anything more unphilosophical, more vicious in reasoning cannot be imagined. When the Veda, speaking not of the Absolute but of Brahman Hiranyagarbha, says that He was alone and grew afraid of His loneliness, it passes, as a daring poetical fancy; and this too might pass as a poetical fancy, but not as serious reasoning. It is no more than an unreasoning recoil from the European idea of absolute, impersonal Unity as a blank and empty Negation. To avoid this appalling conclusion, an Unity is imagined which can be at the same time, not phenomenally but in its ultimate reality, manifold, teeming with myriad memories. It is difficult to understand the precise argumentation of the idea, whether the One when He has re-entered His unity, preserves His experiences in detail or in the mass, say, as a pulp or essence. But at any rate several radical incoherences are in its conception. The Absolute is imagined as a thing incomplete and awaking to a sense of Its incompleteness which It proceeds in a business-like way to remedy; subject therefore to Desire and subject also to Time in which It is now contained! As to the source whence these new impressions are derived which complete the incompleteness of Brahman, that is a still greater mystery. If it was out of Himself, then it was latent in Him, already existing unknown to Himself. One therefore presumes He produced in Himself, since there was no other place to produce them from, things which had no existence previously but now are; that which was not, became; out of nothing, something arose. This is not philosophy but theology; not reasoning, but faith. As faith it might pass; that God is omnipotent and can therefore literally create something out of nothing, is a dogma which one is at liberty to believe or reject, but it is outside the sphere of reasoning).

There seems at first to be a fatal objection to the concession of this postulate; it seems really to evade the fundamental question of the problem of Existence or merely carry the beginning of the problem two steps farther back. For the great crux of the Universe is precisely the difficulty of understanding How and Why the One became Many, and we do not get rid of the difficulty by saying that it proceeds from the Unqualified willing to regard

Himself as qualified. Even if the question How were satisfactorily met by the theory of Maya, the Why of the whole process remains. The goal of Evolution may have been determined,—it is, let us concede, the return of the Infinite upon Itself through the cycle of manifestation; but the beginning of Evolution is not accounted for, its utility is not made manifest. Why did the Absolute turn His face towards Evolution? There seems to be no possible answer to this inquiry; it is impossible to suggest any teleological reason why the Unqualified should will to look on Himself as qualified and so set the wheel of Evolution rolling,—at any rate any reason which would not be hopelessly at variance with the essential meaning of Absoluteness: and it is only an unphilosophic or imperfectly philosophic mind which can imagine that it has succeeded in the attempt. But the impossibility does not vitiate the theory of Maya; for the Vedantist parries this question of the Why with an unanswerable retort. The question itself, he says, as directed to the Brahman, is inadmissible and an impertinence. He, being Absolute, is in His very nature beyond Causality on which all ideas of need, utility, purpose depend, and to suppose purpose in Him is to question His transcendent and absolute nature: That which is beyond causality, has no need to act on a purpose. To catechise the Mighty Infinite as to why It chose to veil Its infinity in Maya, or to insist that the Universe shall choose between being utilitarian or not being at all, is absurd; it betrays a want of perfect intellectual lucidity. The question Why simply cannot arise.

But even when the question of utility is set aside, the intelligibility of the process is not established. The Unqualified willing to regard Himself as qualified is, you say, His Maya. But what is the nature of the process, intellectual or volitional, and how can an intellectual or volitional process be consistently attributed to the Absolute?—on this head at least one expects intellectual satisfaction. But the Vedantist strenuously denies the legitimacy of the expectation. If the "Will to regard" were put forward as a literal statement of a definable fact and its terms as philosophically precise, then the expectation would be justifiable. But the terms are avowedly poetical and therefore logically inadequate; they were merely intended to present the fact of Maya to the intellect in the imperfect and totally inadequate manner which is alone possible to finite speech and thought in dealing with the infinite. No intellectual or volitional process as we conceive will and intellect has really taken place. What then has happened? What is Maya? How came it into existence?

The Vedanta answers this question with its usual uncompromising candour and imperturbable clearness of thought;—We cannot tell, it says, for we do not and cannot know; at least we cannot intelligibly define; and this for the simple reason that the birth of Maya, if it had any birth,took place on the other side of phenomena, before the origin of Time, Space and Causality; and is therefore not cognizable by the intellect which can only think in terms of Time, Space and Causality. A little reflection will show that the existence of Maya is necessarily involved even in the casting of the luminous shadow called Parabrahman. A thing so far removed in the dark backward and abysm before Time, a state, force or process (call it what we will) operating directly in the Absolute Who is but cannot be thought of, may be perceived as a fact, but cannot be explained or defined. We say therefore that Maya is a thing *anirdeshyam*; impossible to define, of which we cannot say that it is,—for it is Illusion,—and we cannot say that it is not,—for it is the Mother of the Universe; we can only infer that it is a something inherent in the being of Brahman and must therefore be not born but eternal, not in Time, but out of Time. So much arises from our premises; more it would be dishonest to pretend to know.

Still Maya is no mere assumption or its existence unprovable! Vedanta is prepared to prove that Maya is; prepared to show *what* it is, not ultimately but as involved in Parabrahman and manifested in the Universe; prepared to describe *how* it set about the work of Evolution, prepared to present Maya in terms of the intellect as a perfectly possible explanation of the entire order of the Universe; prepared even to contend that it is the only explanation perfectly consistent with the nature of being and the recognized bases of scientific and philosophical truth. It is only not prepared to represent the ultimate infinite nature and origin of Maya in precise terms comprehensible to finite mind; for to attempt philosophical impossibilities constitutes an intellectual pastime in which the Vedantist is too much attached to clear thinking to indulge.

What then is Maya? It is, intellectually envisaged, a subjective necessity involved in the very nature of Parabrahman. We have seen that Parabrahman is visible to us in the form of three subjective conceptions with three corresponding objective conceptions, which are the essentialities of His being. But Parabrahman is the Brahman as envisaged by the individual self in the act of returning to its source; Brahman externalized by His own will in the form of Maya is looking at Himself with the curtains of Maya half-lifted but not yet quite thrown back. The forms of Maya have disappeared,

but the essentiality stands behind the returning Self at the entrance of the porch, and it is only when he reaches the inner end of the porch that he passes utterly out of the control of Maya. And the essentiality of Maya is to resolve Existence, Consciousness and Bliss which are really one, into three, the Unity appearing as a Trinity and the single Essentiality immediately breaking up into manifold properties or attributes. The absolute Brahman at the inner entrance is the bright triune Parabrahman, absolute also, but cognizable; at the threshold of the porch He is Parabrahman envisaging Maya, and the next step carries Him into Maya, where Duality begins, Purusha differentiates from Prakriti, Spirit from Matter, Force from Energy, Ego from Non-Ego; and as the descent into phenomena deepens, single Purusha differentiates itself into multitudinous receptacles, single Prakriti into innumerable forms. This is the law of Maya.

But the first step, speaking in the terms of pure intellect, is the envisaging of the Essentiality as possessing Its three subjective and three objective properties,—Existence; Consciousness; Bliss; Truth; Knowledge; Infinity. The moment this happens, by inevitable necessity, the opposite attributes, Nothingness, Non-Sentience, Pain, present themselves as inseparable shadows of the three substances, and with them come the objective triad, Falsehood, Ignorance, Limitation; Limitation necessitates Divisibility, Divisibility necessitates Time and Space; Time and Space necessitate Causality; Causality, the source from which definite phenomena arise, necessitates Change. All the fundamental laws of Duality have sprung into being, necessitated in a moment by the appearance of Saguna Brahman, the Unqualified Infinite become Qualified. They do not really or ultimately exist, because they are inconsistent with the absolute nature of Parabrahman, for even in the sphere of phenomena we can rise to the truth that annihilation is an illusion and only form is destroyed; nothingness is an impossibility, and the Eternal cannot perish; nor can He become non-sentient in whose being sentience and non-sentience are one; nor can He feel pain who is infinite and without limitation. Yet these things, which we know cannot exist, must be conceived and therefore have phenomenally an existence and a reality in impermanence. For this is the paradox of Maya and her works that we cannot say they exist, because they are in reality impossible, and we cannot say they do not exist, because we must conceive them subjectively and, knowledge being now turned outward, envisage them objectively.

Surely this is to land ourselves in a metaphysical morass! But the key of the tangle is always in our hands;—it is to remember that Parabrahman

is Himself only the aspect of the indefinable Absolute who is beyond Science and Nescience, Existence and Non-existence, Limitation and Infinity, and His sixfold attributes are not really six but one, not really attributes of Brahman, but in their unity Brahman Himself. It is only when we conceive of them as attributes that we are driven to regard Annihilation, Non-sentience and Limitation and their correspondings subjective or objective, as realities. But we are driven so to conceive them by something datelessly inherent in the infinite Will to live, in Brahman Himself. To leave for a moment the difficult language of metaphysics which on this dizzy verge of infinity, eludes and bewilders our giddy understanding and to use the trenchant symbolic style of the Upanishads, Parabrahman is the luminous shadow of the Absolute projected in Itself by Itself, and Maya is similarly the dark shadow projected by the Absolute in Parabrahman; both are real because eternal, but sheer reality is neither the light nor the darkness but the Thing-in-itself which they not merely like phenomena represent, but which in an inexplicable way they are. This, then, is Maya in its subjective relation to Parabrahman.

In phenomena Maya becomes objectivised in a hundred elusive forms, amid whose complex variety we long strive vainly to find the one supreme clue. The old thinkers long followed various of the main threads, but none led them to the mysterious starting-point of her motions. "Then," says the Svetasvatara, "they followed after concentration of Yoga and saw the Might of the Spirit of the Lord hidden deep in the modes of workings of its own nature"; *Devatmashakti*, the Energy of the Divine Self, Parabrahman, is Maya; and it is in another passage stated to have two sides, obverse and reverse, Vidya and Avidya, Science and Nescience. Nescience eternally tends to envelop Science, Science eternally tends to displace Nescience. Avidya or Nescience is Parabrahman's power of creating illusions or images, things which seem but are not in themselves; Vidya or Science is His power of shaking off His own imaginations and returning upon His real and eternal Self. The action and reaction of these two great Energies doing work upon each other is the secret of Universal activity. The power of Nescience is evident on every plane of existence; for the whole Universe is a series of images. The sun rises up in the morning, mounts into the cusp of the blue Heavens and descends at evening trailing behind it clouds of glory as it disappears. Who could doubt this irrefragable, overwhelmingly evidenced fact? Every day, through myriads of years, the eyes of millions of men all over the world have borne concurrent and unvarying testimony to the

truth of these splendid voyagings. Than such universal ocular testimony, what evidence can be more conclusive? Yet it all turns out to be an image created by Nescience in the field of vision. Science comes and undeterred by prison and the stake tells us that the sun never voyages through our heavens, is indeed millions of miles from our heavens, and it is we who move round the sun, not the sun round us. Nay, those Heavens themselves, the blue firmament into which poetry and religion have read so much beauty and wonder, is itself only an *image*, in which Nescience represents our atmosphere to us in the field of vision. The light too which streams upon us from our sun and seems to us to fill Space turns out to be no more than an image. Science now freely permitted to multiply her amazing paradoxes, forces us at last to believe that it is only motion of matter affecting us at a certain pitch of vibration with that particular impression on the brain. And so she goes on resolving all things into mere images of the great cosmic ether which alone is. Of such unsubstantialities is this marvellous fabric of visible things created! Nay, it would even appear that the more unsubstantial a thing seems, the nearer it is to ultimate reality. This, which Science proves, says the Vedantist, is precisely what is meant by Maya.

Never dream, however, that Science will end here and that we have come to the last of her unveilings. She will yet go on and tell us that the cosmic ether itself is only an image, that this universe of sensible things and things inferable from sense is only a selection of translations from a far vaster universe of forms built out of subtler matter than our senses can either show or imply to us. And when she has entered into that subtler world with fit instruments of observation and analysis, that too she will relentlessly resolve into mere images of the subtler ether out of which it is born. Behind that subtler universe also there looms a profounder and vaster, but simpler state of existence where there is only the undetermined universality of things as yet involved in their causes. Here Science must come to her latest dealings with matter and show us that this indeterminate universality of things is after all only an image of something in our own self. Meanwhile with that very self she is busy, continually and potently trying to persuade us that all which we believe to be ourselves, all in which our Nescience would have us contentedly dwell, is mere imagery and form. The animal in us insists that this body is the real Self and the satisfaction of its needs our primal duty; but Science (of whom Prof. Haeckel's *Riddle of the Universe* is not the concluding utterance) bids us beware of identifying our Self with a mere mass of primitive animal forms associated together by

an aggregating nucleus of vital impulses; this surely is not the reality of Shakespeare and Newton, Buddha and St. Francis! Then in those vital impulses we seek the bedrock of our being. But these too Science resolves into a delusion or image created by Nescience; for in reality these vital impulses have no existence by themselves but are merely the link established between that material aggregation of animal forms and something within us which we call Mind. Mind too she will not permit us long to mistake for anything more than an image created by the interaction of sensations and response to sensations between the material aggregation of the body and something that governs and informs the material system. This governing power in its action upon mind reveals itself in the discriminating, selecting, ordering and purposeful entity called by Vedanta the Buddhi, of which reason is only one aspect, intellect only one image. Buddhi also turns out eventually to be no entity, only an image, and Science must end by showing us that body, vitality, mind, buddhi are all images of what Philosophy calls Ananda, the pleasure of existence or Will to live; and she reveals to us at last that although this Will divides itself into innumerable forms which represent themselves as individual selves, yet all these are images of one great Cosmic Will to live, just as all material forms are merely images of one great undifferentiated Universality of cosmic matter, causal ether, if we so choose to describe it. That Will is Puruhsa, that Universality is Prakriti; and both are but images of Parabrahman.

So, very briefly and inadequately stated in some of its main principles, runs the Vedantic theory of Maya, for which analytic Science is, without quite knowing it, multiplying a stupendous mass of evidence. Every fresh certainty which this Science adds, swells the mass, and it is only where she is incomplete and therefore should be agnostic, that Vedanta finds no assistance from her analysis. The completion of Science means the final conquest over Nescience and the unveiling of Maya.

SRI AUROBINDO

# THE BHAGAVAD-GITA *

## (*A Translation*)

## CHAPTER III

URJOONA

"IF indeed to Thy mind Thought is mightier than action, O Janardan, vexer of the host, wherefore then dost thou yoke me to a dark and fearful deed? 'Tis as if thou wouldst bewilder me with mixed and tangled speech, therefore speak decidedly one clear thing which shall guide me to my highest welfare."

KRISHNA

"Two are the ways of devotion in this world; already have I declared it to thee, O sinless one: the devotion of the men of the Sankhyas is by singleness in knowledge, by singleness in works is the devotion of the men of Yoga. Not by refraining from works shall a man taste actionlessness, and not by renouncing of the world shall he reach perfection. For verily no man even for a moment remains without doing, since each is made to do whether he will or not by the moods of his essential nature. He who coerceth the organs of action, and sitteth remembering in his heart the things in which the senses work, is a man deceived in spirit, him they call hypocrite, but whosoever governeth the senses with his mind, O Urjoona, and entereth on yoga in works using the organs of action without attachment, is distinguished above all beings. Do thou works that the law demands of thee, for action is mightier than inaction; yea, without works the very maintenance of thy body cannot be. 'Tis by doing works in other spirit than as a sacri-

* From Old Writings

fice, that this world of creatures falleth into bondage to its works; but do thou practise works as a sacrifice, O son of Countie, with a mind free from the yoke of attachment. For with Sacrifice the Father, of old, created all peoples and said unto them, "By Sacrifice shall ye beget offspring; lo, the chosen joys of your desire, they shall be to you the milk of her udders. Cherish you the gods with Sacrifice, and the gods shall cherish you in turn; thus by cherishing each other shall ye attain to your highest welfare. Cherished with sacrifice the gods shall bestow on you the joys you most desire"; and he is no better than a thief who enjoyeth what they give, and giveth not to them again. The good who eat the remnants of the Sacrifice are delivered from all their transgressions, but the accursed eat and drink sin who cook their food but for their own selfish bellies. From food all creatures are born, and from rain is the birth of food, but rain ariseth from the Sacrifice and Sacrifice hath its root in works; works know to be born of the Eternal, for by the imperishable word of the Eternal they were brought into being. Therefore is the Eternal everywhere and in all things; yea, He hath His home for ever in the heart of the Sacrifice. This is the wheel that God hath set going, and who goeth not with it, whose days are a wickedness, whose delight and ease are in the senses, liveth his life in vain, O son of Pritha. But for the man whose whole pleasure is in the Spirit and who satisfies his longing with the Spirit, yea, who is utterly content with the Spirit, for him there is no needful action. For, indeed, he hath no end at all to gain by doing neither any by not doing, he hath no dependence for end or aim on any in even this whole world of creatures. Therefore, without attachment do ever the work before thee, since by doing works without attachment man reacheth the Highest. 'Twas by works alone that the men of old reached to utter perfection, even Junak and the rest. Moreover, even if thou lookest to the right government of the world, thou shouldest be doing. What they see their Greatest do, even that the rest of the folk will practise, and the standard that the Best setteth up, the world will surely follow. Behold, O Partha, there is nought at all in the three worlds that I must do. There is nothing I have not, or that I yet need to win, and still I move in the path of works. For verily were I not to move sleeplessly in the path of works,—lo, men follow utterly the way wherein I tread, O son of Pritha,—then would all these worlds sink and perish were I not to do works, and I should become the creator of bastard confusion and the slayer of all these creatures. That which the ignorant do with attachment to the work, O Bharata, the wise man should do without attachment, wishing only to keep the world

in its traces. Let him not be the cause of division and confusion of mind in the ignorant who are attached to their works, but let him, knowing all, set them to all the works of this world by doing works in Yoga. Lo, works are done but by the modes of Nature in their inevitable working, but the spirit of man is deceived by the sense of separate existence and he sayeth in himself, "I, even I, am the doer." But he who knoweth to the core how the workings of the modes are parcelled out, believeth that the modes work in and upon the modes, and suffereth not attachment to seize him. But most men who are deceived by the modes of Nature cling to her mode—workings; these men of dull brains, these imperfect knowers, let not the perfect knower cause to swerve and stumble.

Reposing all thy works upon Me and with thy heart spiritually inclined, be desireless, be selfless; then arise, fight, O Urjoona, let the fever of thy soul pass from thee. For men who with faith and without carping follow this my Word are released, they also, from bondage to their works; but they who carp at and follow not this my word, know of them that all their knowledge is a delusion; their intellect is nought, they are lost men, Urjoona. Lo, even the wise man who knoweth can but act according to his own essential nature; for to their nature all creatures come at last, and what shall coercing it avail? Only in the field of each and every sense love and hate are there, and ever they lie in ambush; let not the Spirit of man fall into their clutches, for they are his adversaries in his great journey. Better is it, the rule of thine own life ill done, than to follow an alien rule well-accomplished. Yea, death in the path of one's own nature is better: it is a fearful and perilous thing to follow the law of another's being."

URJOONA

"Who then is this by whom man is impelled that he worketh sin in the world, yea, though he will it not, O Varshneya, if forced to it by very violence?"

KRISHNA

"It is craving, it is wrath, the child of Rajoguna, mode of Passion. Know him for Fiend, the Enemy of Man's soul here on earth, a great devourer, a mighty sinner. As a fire engirt with smoke, as a mirror covered with dust, as the unborn child with the caul, so is the universe by

him enveloped. By him knowledge is besieged and girt round, O son of Kunti, by this eternal enemy of the wise, this insatiable fire of desire and passion. The senses, the soul and the overmind, these three are the places of his session, with these he cloudeth over knowledge and bewildereth the embodied spirit. Therefore in the beginning constrain the senses, O lion of the Bharatas, and slay that accursed with the sword of Knowledge and Discernment. High, say the wise, reign the senses, but the heart is higher than they; and the overmind is higher than the heart; he who is higher than the overmind, that is He. Thus when thou hast understood him who is higher than the overmind, slay thy enemy, O strong-armed, even that terrible and invincible one whose shape is passion.

SRI AUROBINDO

# THE GOLDEN BIRD

IT was in the forests of Asan that the Golden Bird first flew out from a flower-besieged thicket and fluttered before the dazzled eyes of Luilla. It was in the forests of Asan,—the open and impenetrable, the haunt of the dancers and untrodden of human feet, coiling place of the cobra and the Python, lair of the lion and jaguar, formidable retreat of the fleeing antelope, yet the green home of human safety where a man and a maiden could walk in the moonlit night and hear unconcerned the far-off broil of the Kings of the wilderness. It was into the friendly and open places that the golden bird fluttered, but it came no less from the coverts of dread and mystery. From the death and the night it flew out into the sunlight where Luilla was happily straying.

Luilla loved to wander on the verges of danger, just where those flower-besieged thickets began and formed for miles together a thorny and tangled rampart full at once of allurement and menace. She did not venture in, for she had a great fear of the thorns and brambles and a high respect for her radiant beauty, her own constant object of worship and the daily delight of all who dwell for a while on earth labouring the easy and kindly soil on the verges of the forests of Asan. But always she wandered close to the flowery wall and her mind, safe in its voluntary incorporeality, strayed like a many-hued butterfly, far into the forbidden region which the gods had so carefully secluded. Perhaps secretly she hoped that some day some kingly and leonine head would thrust itself out through the flowers and compel her with a gaze of friendly and majestic invitation or else that the green poisonous head of a serpent reposing itself on a flower would scrutinise her out of narrow eyes and express a cunning approval of her beauty. It was not out of fear of the lions and the serpents that Luilla forbore to enter the secret places. She knew she could overcome the most ferocious intentions of any destroyer in the world, firm-footed or footless, if only he would give her three minutes before making up his mind to eat or bite her. But neither lion nor serpent

strayed out of these appointed haunts. It was the golden bird that first fluttered out from the thickets to Luilla.

Luilla looked at it as it flitted from bough to bough, and her eyes were dazzled and her soul wondered. For the little body of the bird was an inconstant flame of flying and fleeting gold and the wings that opened and fluttered were of living gold and the small shapely head was crested gold and the long graceful quivering tail was trailing feathered gold; all was gold about the bird, except the eyes and they were two jewels of a soft ever-changing colour and sheltered strange looking depths of love and thought in their gentle brilliance. On the bough where it perched, it seemed as if all the soft-shaded leaves were suddenly sunlit. For as Luilla accustomed her eyes to the flickering brightness of the golden bird, it hovered at last on a branch, settled and sang. And its voice also was of gold.

The bird sang in its own high secret language; but Luilla's ear understood its thoughts and in Luilla's soul as it thirsted and listened and trembled with delight, the song shaped itself easily into human speech. This then was what the bird sang—the bird that came out of the Death's night, sang to Luilla a song of beauty and of delight:

> "Luilla! Luilla! Luilla! green and beautiful are the meadows where the children run and pluck the flowers and green and beautiful the pastures where the calm-eyed cattle graze, green and beautiful the cornfields ripening on the village bounds, but greener are the impenetrable thickets of Asan than her open places of life, and more beautiful than the meadows and the pastures and the cornfields are the forests of death and night. More ensnaring to some is the danger of the jaguar than the attractive face of a child, more welcome the foot-tracks of the lion as it haunts the pastures of the cattle, more fair and fruitful the thorn and the wild briar than the fields full of ripening grain. And this I know that no such flowers bloom in the safety and ease of Asan's meadows, though they make a thick and divine treading for luxurious feet, as I have seen blooming on the borders of the wild morass, in the heart of the bramble thicket and over the mouth of the serpent's lair. Shall I not take thee, O Luilla! into those woods? Thou shalt pluck the flowers in the forests of night and death, thou shalt lay thy hands on the lion's mane.
>
> O Luilla! O Luilla! O Luilla!"

SRI AUROBINDO

# BETWEEN GOD AND MAN

## III

SUPERMIND, in which is concentrated the three-fold Nature of the Divine, is the all-powerful creative Principle that draws directly on the inexhaustible Power, Knowledge and Will-Force of the Supreme. We must differentiate therefore, between this dynamic Principle and the absolute self-existence of the Divine—that which is the transcendent, ineffable and supracosmic Reality. For Supermind is truly the Lord and Creator of Cosmos, and corresponds, as we have suggested, to what the monotheistic religions had traditionally visioned as God, the sustainer of the worlds. In the ancient Indian Vedas which were based on a high cosmological vision, the reality of Supermind is referred to more specifically as the Truth-consciousness, and was realised to be the Light beyond this world of darkness. As the life-giving creative Dynamis of the universe its image was the Sun-god or Savitri as it was thus known. In that ancient symbolism it was he who is the creator and measurer of the worlds, being filled with the pure divine Light; and all the gods belong to him just as the sun-rays are emanations of the ever-living creative energy of the Sun. There were also later, or perhaps parallel realisations of this all-creative Force of the universe which sought to bring a closer intimacy into the relation between that high and lofty Power and the world of men. As the very bearer of Creation this Power was seen more realistically to be the Divine Mother who is the very sustainer and guardian of our life and existence. In this way the symbol of Savitri, in her descent from the supramental Sun, became changed. There emerged a more personal, a more living and noble relationship—that of Woman as the saviour of mankind,—which could penetrate more deeply into human life. This was an aspiration and symbol that was made more widespread through the ancient puranas and epics of India. We might also observe that the earliest known monotheistic worship may likewise have been derived from a contemporary sect of sun-

worshippers, as has been suggested. At least it is evident that the ancient Semites, imbued as they were with the living presence of God, found some confirmation and support for their intense belief in the oneness of God in their contact with the worshippers of the Sun-power, since this latter represents more naturally the sole material source of our earthly life and light. This powerfully symbolised the supreme Power behind all manifest things, and pointed to the Ultimate Source of all cosmic power and creativity. From this ancient occult truth emerged the stronger conviction of the existence of one God, the Supreme. It was only later that a more personal experience of God obliterated the earlier cosmological vision.

It is interesting to note that this intertwined dual image of the Lord and Power-giver of our universal existence, as the Heavenly Father and Divine Mother, has in fact appeared in diverse and separate forms throughout the cultural history of man. In its origin it points to a cosmic Reality, revealing the central Truth of the supreme process of the Divine Creation itself. The very fact that there exists a double symbolism springing from an ancient human aspiration,—that of a Heavenly Father and Mother Earth on the one hand, and of an Earthly Father (Yin) and Heavenly Mother (Yang) on the other,—indicates the true interchangeable Natures of Heaven and Earth, for behind this imagery is the dual inter-related process of descent and ascent. When Supermind or the Truth-consciousness was regarded purely from the standpoint of ascent, as it was by the Vedic Seers, the whole conception became directed away from earth and the earth-nature. We were thus presented with a cosmic divinity which had the wideness and luminousness of an omniscient and omnipotent Creator whose abode is ever the Truth-plane or World of Light beyond. From this detached cosmic conception the masculine element more naturally became the dominant factor; and being aloof from man's life in the world it came to represent the high overarching Power, the omniscient and sovereign Lord of Cosmos. At the same time however, another powerful strand of spiritual aspiration had persisted, which being more rooted to the earth life sought to bring or rather to induce that all-creative Power to come down nearer to our human level of comprehension, and into a material and more tangible form. Here the other aspect of that supreme Power formed itself and became manifest. It was no longer something aloof and detached, but appeared as a living Dynamism that belonged to the very essence of man's earth life, works and being. In its wideness it was seen to be the universal matrix, the womb out of which all things had sprung and to which they were ever connected. In

its descent this divine Power thence revealed itself as the Divine Mother, with Her four special aspects or powers for the uplift of earth and mankind. Being more intimately connected to the earth-life it is this living Reality therefore that is specially related to man's highest aspirations and endeavour in the world.

As the living and all-pervading creative Power of the Divine, we thus see that Supermind is both a personal and impersonal Reality. But in order to avoid the anthropomorphic concepts of the past, which tended to interpret this supreme creative Power of the Divine solely in terms of our petty human attributes, we would better leave aside the personal aspect until the impersonal and universal aspects are clearly seen. Hence the wider fundamental truth of Supermind and its universal bearings must first be considered, for on it depends our whole personal approach and relationship. Firstly we have to see that the Truth-consciousness belongs not only to the plane above, aloof and detached from the world, but is present everywhere and underlies all movements. The very forms of creation are indeed powers of that all-creative Knowledge, possessing in their own being the seeds of the original cosmic-truth and harmony. Thus from the very beginning of Creation the seed of Matter was imbued with the dynamic essence of its primal creative Force, and through every stage of the evolutionary progression the hidden essence of its being is ever guided inwardly, as well as from above, by this secret Power. It is only because of our present restricted orbit of sensory perception that we cannot comprehensively embrace this integral truth of things.

From a higher and more rarefied level of mind, however, it becomes possible for us to glimpse something of the integral nature of the world and its relation to the divine Consciousness-Force that pervades the universe. While the sovereign character of the Truth-consciousness is ever an indivisible all-pervading Presence, we realise also that it has chosen to operate through the restricted and veiled instrumentality of a multiplicity of isolated and separate centres. Yet clearly it is only by this means that it can ultimately manifest a divine representation, a living replica of its own perfection and harmony even out of the substance of an apparently inert material field. That which was wholly Inconscient must ultimately become wholly Conscient. It was clearly a purposeful self-limitation and obscuration, in order to act secretly and superconsciently through each indivisible particle centre in accordance with a higher Law and Harmony. Thus Supermind as the divine Power not only sustains all things but also dwells within each as the

Light-seed of the being, so that all things are secretly governed by that indwelling Vision and Consciousness. Thus even the involved movement within the atom, the intricate inter-relation of atoms with each other (what we call their affinity or non-affinity), the growth of the seed and the complex though purposive movement of the minutest organisms and organic systems of life, are all guided by the same Power, the same higher Law operating in them from the supreme Truth-consciousness above.

The creative Power of an all-comprehending Knowledge is the basic Principle of Supermind's action—comprehending and pervading all things and governing their ultimate outcome. It is clear that the principle of unity is therefore the constant and paramount factor throughout all its operations and statuses. In its cosmic creativity there is no fundamental distinction, even as we can realise through the cosmic Consciousness, between the knower (the creative Consciousness), the knowledge (which is the all-pervading omniscient Reality of the Divine), and the known (the universal field in its totality). All Cosmos is indeed the vibrant function of the Truth-consciousness, which itself has emanated from and embodies the Divine Perfection and Nature. In this cosmic creativity it is obvious that mind is but an inferior term that is as yet groping towards and seeking the Perfection beyond; and its innate separative nature indeed prevents it from attaining of itself that integral and all-embracing Unity which is native to and sovereignly possessed by Supermind. It is because of this natural restrictedness of mind that one is oliged to seek a channel or stairway through the higher reaches of mind to that greater Consciousness beyond, of which the first step is to openly accept the comprehensive Power of a higher Knowledge that belongs to the supramental Light of the Truth-consciousness. For it is by this open acceptance that the mind can willingly surrender itself to become an active instrument of Truth, instead of remaining as at present an instrument of ignorance and error. Just as the discriminative function of mind sifts and corrects the mixed and faulty reports of the senses, so the illumined mind as the instrument of the Truth-consciousness would be able to integrate and re-orientate all the scattered operations that characterise mind's present functioning. In its present condition of unknowing we can indeed liken the blind seeking of mind to a man groping his way backwards along a course which inwardly he feels will lead him to his true origin and home. But he can only see the places he has already traversed, and nothing of the way ahead along the course he is pursuing. Only when mind has begun to realise the reality of a higher Power and opens itself to its influence can it become

filled with a new Consciousness that will give one a new orientation and a new vision. It is by this complete turn that one is able to see the way ahead and the ultimate goal for which man's efforts are at present but vaguely probing.

Although Supermind dwelt at first quiescent in the Vastness of the Supreme in an undivided Oneness with that pure Divine Nature, its latent dynamic creativity was stirred to emerge and give itself utterly to the creation of the lower cosmic worlds. Thus it was from that equipoised concentration of the Divine Nature that the lower worlds were born. A multiplicity of separative centres came into being, each a concentrated centre of action and imbued with the sense of its own separate existence, yet within what is really a complexly co-ordinated and inter-related system of cosmic creativity. This sense of separateness however, is clearly a practical device, the preliminary and not the final state of things, which has been created in order to bring about a diversity of specialised action-centres that together can produce a composite organic development. Thus each and every form became a central indwelling Soul detached from an outer mechanically functioning Nature. In every one it is the same Soul, the same Being; while the multiplication is at the same time a potent means of bringing an intricate though harmonious play of differences into effective action. Here in this differentiation of the original Unity we can trace the beginning of the separation between the multiplicity below and the supreme Unity above; which nevertheless is a Unity that only finds its own completensss in its self-division into a multiplicity drawn ultimately to regain the original Oneness. Here in this dichotomy of the original Consciousness—into that of the comprehending Consciousness on the one hand, and the apprehending Consciousness on the other—we can discover the supramental origin revealing the beginning of the formation of the triple world of Ignorance, of which this phenomenal world of Matter, Life and Mind is as yet the emergent partiality. But we are also aware of a further Principle, the embryonic soul-seed, which is in fact the essence of the pure Divine Nature; and by its plunge into the deep Inconscient of the lower cosmic worlds had formed the nucleus around which the evolutionary ascent could begin. It is by the soul's long struggle with the Ignorance that a Being infused with its own native Light from the supernature, must eventually emerge out of the darkness of the lower Nature and hence bring the Fullness and Perfection of the Divine into manifest life. But in the present critical stage of the soul's ascent, while it is yet enmeshed in the partial formation of unity in its journey back to the real Unity, it has

necessarily to counter with the ego, which had in fact created the false sense of unity and completeness in man. This dominance by the ego-power forms the central inner resistance which man has first to conquer.

In this transitory stage when man is hovering unsteadily between the higher possibility and the lower actuality, it is by a full realisation of mind's true origin, fallen as it is from the high and vast wideness of the Truth-consciousness, that can give him the true release. For then he would begin to break himself away from the bondage of an eternal recurrence and fixity which pivots on mind's hypnotic circling round the resistant core of ego. By that realisation he can begin to reach towards the rarefied levels of mind whose larger receptiveness more naturally opens him to the Light, illuminating for him the giant stairway by which the individual can ascend and feel the intuitive, illuminative and cosmic wideness of a higher and greater Consciousness. Here we discover that the inner subtle link between the higher and lower Natures is an ever-present reality, by which it becomes possible to progressively establish a firm and permanent contact of all parts of the being with the supramental Light. This would open the way for the manifestation of the Truth-consciousness, which is indeed covertly labouring to break through the veil of darkness and ignorance that envelopes the world.

NATHANIEL PEARSON

# THE DIVINE COLLABORATORS

## Part III

WE have now to consider the identity which exists between Sri Aurobindo's idea of physical transformation through service in an integral surrender and the Mother's, as expressed by her before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo.

Sri Aurobindo insists so much on physical transformation, because without it the spiritual achievements of the human soul cannot be manifested in earthly life, individual and collective. It has been possible to purify the mind and the heart to a certain extent and even to discipline and regulate (more by suppression or repression than otherwise) the life-parts of man, but the physical nature has been left almost unreclaimed. Its customary habits and tendencies, its crude appetites and impulses, its mechanical reactions and responses to outward impacts have always been the disgust and despair of even the greatest of spiritual men. Hathayoga, rightly practised, gives considerable control over the physical body, but not over the whole physical nature; and even the best control acquired by Rajayoga is neither conquest nor conversion.

The bitter truth has to be admitted that no amount of spiritual realisation has ever been able to overcome the inherent darkness and disabilities of the physical part of human nature. Inertia, obscurity, disease, decrepitude and death; doubt, obstinacy in error, unwillingness to change, a helpless subjection to past associations, proneness to suffering and a sharp sense of egoistic separation have been the invariable stamp of it and a constant goad to a resort to absorbed contemplation or trance. Truth is not known in the physical being, because it is gross and dense; peace cannot dwell securely in it, because it is turbid and restless; the soul's limpid joy cannot flow out of it, because it is choked with pleasures and pains. Even when universal love floods within, little slimy swirls of hatred or anger or grief or jealousy may be detected on its outer fringes, perhaps more as lingering

remnants of past habits than as any fresh movements; but they linger long and seem never to leave definitively. And to crown all this, one is often surprised by sudden blinding and convulsive raids from the subconscient. Movements and elements of nature which one would have thought dead, suddenly recur and recur again and seek to recover their lost empire. There are many such awkward and disturbing factors which hide behind the calm and imposing façade of a Yogi's life, and betray themselves only to the eye that can probe below the surface.

Sri Aurobindo will have none of these ungainly sun-spots in the perfection of the Integral Yoga; for, the basic aim of his Yoga is a dynamic union with the Divine in life, in every movement of life, in the whole being, in the entire nature and in all its thoughts and feelings and actions; and a persistence of the obscure habits of the physical nature and the subconscient scum is absolutely incompatible with it. So long as a man is on earth, the terrestrial life is his field of achievement, and all that he gains by personal effort or by divine Grace must have a full and perfect expression in his life, whether the gain is physical, vital, mental or spiritual; and if any acquisition, however highly spiritual it may be, fails to manifest itself in his life, it means that it is still a potentiality and has to be realised in terms of the material existence. If the Upanishadic dictum is true that all that is here is there in the Beyond, and all that is there is also here, the only logical deduction can be that all that is there is latent here or only partly patent, and can manifest in its fullness; and that so to manifest is the sole reason of its being here.

Sri Aurobindo wrote in his letter to Barindra, "What God wants from man is to manifest Him here, in the individual and the collectivity—to realise God in life. The ancient systems of Yoga failed to sythesise or unite spirituality and life; they have explained the world away as Maya (illusion) or a transient lila (play). The result has been a dwindling of the life-force and the decline of India."

In one of his letters to his disciples, he says, "Unless the external nature is transformed, one may go as high as possible and have the largest experiences...but the external mind remains an instrument of Ignorance." In "More Lights on Yoga", he remarks, "The whole physical life must be transformed. This material world does not want a mere change of consciousness in us. It says in effect, 'You retire into bliss, become luminous, have the divine knowledge, but that does not alter me. I still remain the hell I practically am! The true change of consciousness is one that will

change the physical conditions of the world and make it an entirely new creation."

By transformation Sri Aurobindo does not mean mere purification, as we have already indicated. By physical transformation he means a reversal of the whole physical consciousness and a radical conversion of the very grain and gamut of its working—".....a spiritualising and illumination of the whole physical consciousness and a divinising of the law of the body."[1] It is a long and difficult work depending for its success on two indispensable factors: self-offering of the individual through every action of life done as an offering to the Divine, and the bringing down of the Light-Force of the Vijnanamaya Purusha into the physical being. The Vijnanashakti or supramental Force descends and suffuses the physical being and awakens and activates the divine consciousness that is submerged in it. Purification can be done by the enlightened human intelligence, but it is only a partial and precarious purification that can be thus effected; for the reaches of our being where lie the roots of our earthly nature are sealed to our mental vision, and in our impatient ardour for purification, we often end by doing nothing better than maiming and crippling much of our nature and even hacking away some recalcitrant elements which, once conquered and converted, might have contributed to a substantial enrichment and perfection of our being. The human mind cannot evidently be a wise and efficient agent of purification. Itself a creation and sport of the lower nature of the three gunas, and incurably conditioned in all its ideas and principles and judgements by those gunas working in shifting combinations, it cannot, by itself, achieve the dynamic freedom necessary for purifying the nature. Besides, even its highest ideas and principles are nothing but an evolution out of a complex of sense-data, inference, imagination, reasoning and the prevailing bent and bias of the whole being—they are not facets and formations of truth received undiminished and undeformed from their authentic origin. To meet Truth face to face, we have to go beyond our mind of dividing ignorance; and it is only when, transcending the mind, we have climbed to the Truth in its own domain, that we can bring down its authentic omnipotent Force to purify and transform our nature, mental, vital and physical. This Force is not only omnipotent, it is also omniscient, being the luminous Force of the Supreme, and it knows best how to grapple with

[1] *The Synthesis of Yoga by Sri Aurobindo*

the tangled skein of our nature and weave out of it a flawless divine Supernature, a miracle of transfiguration.

But action is the indispensable means, and without it the transformation of the physical nature is out of the question. It is not only a state of passive peace and purity that is sought for in the Integral Yoga, but a free and unhampered expression of the divine Will and a fulfilment of the divine purpose in a life of God-guided action.

"Even for those whose first natural movement is a consecration, a surrender and a resultant entire transformation of the thinking mind and its knowledge, or a total consecration, surrender and transformation of the heart and its emotions, the consecration of works is a needed element in that change....It is possible, indeed, to begin with knowledge or Godward emotion solely or with both together and to leave works for the final movement of the Yoga. But there is then this disadvantage that we may tend to live too exclusively within, subtilised in subjective experience, shut off in our isolated inner parts; there we may get incrusted in our spiritual seclusion and find it difficult later on to pour ourselves triumphantly outwards and apply to life our gains in the higher Nature. When we turn to add this external kingdom also to our inner conquests, we shall find ourselves too much accustomed to an activity purely subjective and ineffective on the material plane. There will be an immense difficulty in transforming the outer life and the body. Or we shall find that our action does not correspond with the inner light: it still follows the old accustomed mistaken paths, still obeys the old normal imperfect influences; the Truth within us continues to be separated by a painful gulf from the ignorant mechanism of our external nature."[1]

Having dwelt at some length on the question of the transformation of the physical consciousness and being of man, as envisaged by Sri Aurobindo, we turn now to the Mother's conception of it, as expressed by her *before her meeting with Sri Aurobindo*. It is here, on the question of the transformation of the physical being, that the identity of their views seems to be all the more striking; for, the subject with all its far-reaching implications is almost a new one, hardly ever treated in a complete and comprehensive way by any of the Yogis and mystics of the past, and yet all-important to

[1] *The Synthesis of Yoga*, Book I

the future of humanity. The divine fulfilment aimed at by the Integral Yoga pivots upon the perfection of the physical transformation. If homo sapiens cannot be transformed out of his normal animality into a dynamic divinity, there can be no life divine upon earth. And yet, Sri Aurobindo affirms, the establishment of the divine life is inevitable, as it is the logical culmination of the process of evolution which brings out from the indeterminate inconscience the fundamental principles of existence involved there. As Matter has evolved, and life and mind, so the other principles must also evolve. Therefore the life divine on earth is a destiny which cannot be reversed, and of which the achievement of the physical transformation is an inescapable pre-condition.

In 1912 the Mother wrote: "The terrestrial transformation and harmonisation can be brought about by two processes which, though opposite in appearance, must combine,—must act upon each other and complete each other:

(1) Individual transformation, an inner development leading to the union with the Divine Presence.

(2) Social transformation, the establishment of an environment favourable to the flowering and growth of the individual."

This terrestrial transformation of which the Mother speaks, can be nothing else than the physical transformation of man, individual and collective, leading to the establishment of the life divine on earth. On more or less the same subject, the Mother says in "The Supreme Discovery": "Let us allow ourselves to be penetrated and transformed by this Divine Love and give up to Him, without reservation, this marvellous instrument, our material organism. He will make it produce its maximum on every plane of activity." The stress is, as always, on the physical being of man and its radical change, so that the spiritual wealth may be poured out in terms of material facts.

Those who have read the Mother's "Prayers and Meditations" know how, practically through the whole book of over 350 Prayers, the recurring theme is the same: the transformation of Matter, the transmutation of the physical being of man. But this is not a theme that originated with the "Prayers and Meditations," but had its birth in the Mother's consciousness very early in her life, and has been ever since the one, outstanding mission of her life. She too felt like Sri Aurobindo that divine perfection could only be attained in earthly life by conquering and converting Matter, and not before that. In a speech delivered in 1912 in France, she said, "Built

as we are out of an imperfect substance, we cannot but share in this imperfection." "Whatever therefore may be the possible degree of perfection, consciousness and knowledge that our deeper being possesses, the simple fact that it incarnates in a physical body gives rise to obstacles to the purity of its manifestation. And yet, the incarnation has for its goal precisely the victory over these obstacles, the transformation of Matter."[1] The perception of the inherent imperfection of Matter, which could very well have, as it almost always has in other cases, led to a world-shunning spirituality, sublime in its islanded grandeur, turned the Mother's whole being towards the conquest of that very imperfection and a definitive victory over Matter. And she has expressed in unmistakable terms the object of our birth or incarnation here, the ultimate goal of our earthly life, as "the transformation of Matter" which is, as is well known, the central aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga and philosophy.

In her Prayer of the 26th November, 1912, the Mother, addressing the Divine, says, "....Thou who everywhere raisest up Matter in this ardent and wonderful aspiration, in this sublime thirst for Eternity." These ideas of "raising up Matter," the "aspiration of Matter" and its "thirst for Eternity" are so very new to the philosophico-spiritual concepts of the West and so very fundamental to the teaching of Sri Aurobindo that the identity we have been studying becomes apparent even to a cursory glance, and has not to be laboured into recognition.

Dwelling on the same subject in her Prayer of the 15th June, 1913, the Mother says that to know that a part of our being is perfectly pure and to commune and identify ourselves with that part is very helpful, but this knowledge and communion must be utilised for "hastening the earthly transfiguration," for, that is, indeed, "the sublime work" of the Divine in the material world. To be identified only with the immaculate soul and commune with it in the silence of the depths is not the ultimate object of human birth. This identification must be extended and reproduced in every part of our composite being, and utilised as a unifying and integrating force working at the same time as a potent leverage of our ascent to the Divine. It must be translated into the terms of the physical being for the "earthly transfiguration."

This work of physical transformation is no morbid obsession with the body. It is, in fact, only when one rises far above the body-consciousness

[1] "*Words of Long Ago*" by the Mother

that one gains the power to transform the body. Deploring the engrossing care for the preservation of the body, which is almost universal in men, the Mother says, "Nothing can be more humiliating, nothing more depressing than these thoughts turned always towards the preservation of the body, this preoccupation with health, with our subsistence, with the framework of our life. How trivial are these things, a thin smoke dissolved by a simple breath, vanishing like mirage before a single thought turned towards Thee (the Divine)."[1] And yet it is not a neglect of the body that the Mother teaches, for she knows that "the body is a marvellous instrument" and that "there is....no limit to its growth in capacities and to its progress." We are reminded of what Sri Aurobindo says in this connection in his "Bases of Yoga": "There should be no attachment to it (the body), but no contempt or neglect either of the material part of our nature." In his Letters, Vol. IV, he says, "Matter itself is secretly a form of Spirit and has to reveal itself as that, can be made to wake to consciousness and evolve and realise the Spirit, the Divine within it....That does not mean that the body has to be valued for its own sake or that the creation of a divine body in a future evolution of the whole being has to be contemplated as an end and not as a means...."

Regarding the indispensability of the active service of the Divine in an integral surrender, the Mother is as definite as Sri Aurobindo, and as uncompromising. This service is not a routine round of rituals which the religions prescribe, nor is it philanthropy, humanitarianism or altruism which pass by that name and usually constitute the active life of spiritual men. By service of the Divine the Mother means the constant and conscious offering of each movement of one's nature—physical, vital, psychic, mental and spiritual—to the Divine and to none and nothing but the Divine. All actions of life are accepted and turned towards the Divine except those which are tainted with desire or clearly detrimental to spiritual growth. This wholesale offering of all work is the only means of dedicating all our faculties and their functions, all our energies and their hidden or apparent motives to the Mother, the supreme Force of the Divine, so that they may all be purified, illumined and transfigured for the very purpose for which they have been created—the perfect manifestation of the Divine. Service has therefore two stages: one, in which, casting away all our desires and self-interest, we offer all our actions to the Divine, and through this in-

[1] "*Prayers and Meditations* of the Mother"—August 17, 1913

tegral self-consecration attain to release from the ego and its separative ignorance; and the other, in which, liberated and transfigured in all our parts, we become luminous instruments of the unveiled Divine.

Sri Aurobindo's views on this point are much too well-known to need recapitulation here. We shall only quote a few lines from the Mother's writings to show how her thought and practice have moved on identical lines since the beginning of her spiritual life.

The Mother regards the daily activity of life as the anvil on which all the elements of our being must pass and repass in order to be "purified, refined, made supple and ripe for the illumination which contemplation gives to them."[1] If one gives up the daily activity, one gives up the very process by which, and by which alone, the elements and energies of one's being can be purified and transformed. But, it must be carefully noted, the work of the transformation of the physical being is neither an easy nor a short work; for, each element of our physical personality has to be not only purified and illumined, but impersonalised and taught "forgetfulness of self and self-abnegation." It is not enough to dislodge the ego from the centre of one's being,—that might be deemed enough by those who seek their spiritual fulfilment elsewhere than on earth—it must be dislodged from every element of one's being, every fibre of one's nature. That is why even for the best of sadhakas sudden and "striking conversions cannot be integral." "Truly to attain the goal, none can escape the need of innumerable experiences of every kind and every instant."[2]

The secret of success in this uphill work of physical transformation is, according to the Mother, "Living Thee (the Divine) alone in the act whatever it may be, ever and always Thee." Divine union through integral self-offering, and transformation and divine fulfilment through integral dynamic union, is the formula of the life of service as conceived and taught by the Mother and Sri Aurobindo.

In Matter itself, and not elsewhere, lies "the seed of its own salvation." Therefore, not by renouncing the material life and its activities,—a renunciation which the Mother calls "a struggle useless and pernicious"—but by recognising in each atom of Matter "the Will of God who inhabits it" and identifying oneself with it, that "the promised day, the day of great transformation will be near."[3]

RISHABHCHAND

[1] *Prayers and Meditations of the Mother*, Nov. 28, 1912
[2] ibid.
[3] *The Supreme Discovery* by the Mother

# IS IT ECLECTICISM?

## (*A Reply*)

READERS of *The Advent* are aware that some time ago there appeared in it serially the *Tattwaprabha*, 'Lights on the Fundamentals' which was later published in book-form in 1950. While it has received a good welcome from the Press and individuals even from distant quarters outside Madras, recently my attention was drawn to a solitary instance of bitter and hostile criticism[1] laden with extravagant injustice meted out to the work by a light-hearted mind tarring it as a 'pointless disservice'. This is so, notwithstanding the Prefatory Note which shows that this treatise was included in the list of works that can be considered as 'service'! Now the object of my writing is not to answer the charges in detail and show that the critic is wrong. A contemptuous silence would have been the only right reply had he not used certain terms and thrown ideas which slyly, if not ambiguously, extend the attack using this small treatise as a jumping board on the System of Philosophy and Yoga to which I have thoroughly given myself these thirty years and more. The writer is clever and acts the admirer who appreciates *The Life Divine* ostensibly, in order to condemn this book in comparison, but really for a show-off of his learning and catholicity and use whatever information he may have obtained from reading these and similar books for self-gratification, appreciation, and also to sermonise on the probable unsoundness of 'Emergent Evolution' and his proficiency in the field of 'alternate theories'. He is a connoisseur of the art of mnemonic verse composition and refers to Shankara, for comparison, and he has himself or mouths the opinions, ideas, preferences, prejudices and the rest current among Pundits of this school and that. He 'fabricates' a title to this treatise as a 'fabrication' of Eclecticism and all dogma. He finds no theological tradition to support the statements made in the book, i.e. about the system expounded.

[1] Vide *The Vedanta Kesari*, Oct. '51

It is about this eclecticism and theory and dogma and the alleged absence of theological tradition that I propose to write here, not necessarily to convince the critic of his error but to make the position clear to those who are interested in getting a correct idea and true appreciation of what I have done on the basis of Sri Aurobindo's Teachings.

First about this system: it must be understood at the outset, as I have stated elsewhere, that Sri Aurobindo never wrote anything in the traditional spirit of orthodox exponents of systems, to win support for his teachings by proving their conformity to the accepted authorities. He saw that his own realisations bore testimony to the truths embodied in the teachings of the Gita, the Upanishads and last, by no means least, the Rig Veda. Hence he wrote on all these into the details of which I need not enter here. And when he began to build his philosophical system, to write serially *The Life Divine* in the *Arya*, at bottom it was his realisation that gave him the strength but the materials for building the system were undoubtedly provided by the Vedantic scriptures, the Upanishads and the Gita. While later on, in revising the series for publication in two Volumes, he took into account the increasing volume of modern thought that flowed from the West, judged it in proper light and assimilated it into his system. Thus at the base, as he himself has stated, it is Vedantic; at the apex it is his distinct contribution. It is certainly not borrowed from the West—in spite of the term Evolution which in his sense of the term is soul's evolution which is not foreign to ancient Indian thought—cf. Patanjali's *jātyantara pariṇāmaḥ*, only it is there Nature's, here it is soul's. But the further development, and the logical sequel to the evolving soul in man, he envisaged as the one above the mental level. Here too the Upanishad has given him the clue, the hint.

It must be noted that a system is not built out of a previous non-existence; the system-builder does not start with a *nil*, *tabula rasa*, does not evolve a system out of his brain, he takes up the materials that are already there—in this instance the material has come down from the Vedic Age down to modern times—tests them, chooses and selects the substantial element, rejects the outworn forms, develops the latent suggestions, gives the system in a finished form, maintaining the structure intact, but supple not rigid so that it can accommodate, if it is comprehensive enough, fresh ideas and details of experiences and truths discovered to fit in with the system and fall into their place in right adjustment.

Here is no theory hatched by brooding in the brain, groping and guessing.

He is in line with the ancients—the seers and sages and thinkers—whose tradition he appreciates and admits to be praiseworthy,—the tradition that a philosophy which is not based upon some experience of the fundamental Truth has no value and indeed Indian thought in the religio-philosophical systems abhors speculation and fanciful ingenuity. And Sri Aurobindo has pointed out that in the thinking age which followed the early Vedic and Vedantic Teachings, "when the great and integral truth of the Upanishads was broken into divergent schools of thought, even in giving so much prominence to the intellectual side, the systems do not depart from the constant need of the Indian temperament; it works out from spiritual experience through the exact and laborious inspection and introspection of the intellect—the intellectual method and form whose real substance is not intellectual but a result of a profound intelligence working on the stuff of the sight and spiritual experience." Therefore if it has been able to make its conclusions articles of faith, it does so on the basis of experience by any one who will take the necessary means and apply the only possible test. You can call them dogmas; but they are not founded upon flimsy grounds of fancy, on the sands of conjecture, but on the firm and unshaky rock of experience. After all, what is a theory meant to be? If it can serve the purpose for which it is meant, any theory is good enough to hold on. 'A theory may be one-sided or wrong, yet it may be useful and extremely practical as science has amply shown. A theory in philosophy is nothing else than a support for the mind, a practical device to help it to deal with its object, a staff to uphold it and make it walk more confidently and get along with its difficult journey.'

Now it must be borne in mind that the bulk of metaphysical thinking in the West differs fundamentally from the philosophical systems of India. They are hypotheses—theories and dogmas also—and conclusions which are not the result of the Reason working on the stuff of their own experiences and realisations or of others before them as in India beginning from the hoary ages of the Veda and Vedanta and coming down to modern times. However, certain bold thinkers in the West dissatisfied with the philosophies began to choose what they considered to be the best in each of the systems known to them and presented it as a whole, a workable hypothesis. They call it Eclecticism.

A word about the origin and movement of Eclecticism is necessary here to show how ludicrous and inapplicable it is to the *Fundamentals* of Sri Aurobindo's System itself or even as it is briefly presented in the treatise

animadverted upon. In the last century the term 'eclectic' "came to be applied to a number of French philosophers who differed considerably from one another. Of these the earliest were Pierre Paul Royer-Collard who was a follower of Thomas Reid in the main, and Maine de Biran; but the name is more appropriately given to the school of which Victor Cousin," Barthelemy St. Hilaire and a few others were distinguished members. But Victor Cousin whose views carried weight freely adopted what pleased him in the doctrines of Maine de Biran, Royer-Collard and others, "of Kant, Schelling and Hegel, and also of the ancient philosophies, expressly maintained that the eclectic is the only method now open to the philosopher. He was of the view that the philosopher's function resolves itself into critical selection and nothing more. 'Each system', he asserted, 'is not false, but incomplete, and in reuniting all incomplete systems we should have a complete philosophy, adequate to the totality of consciousness.'" This is the latest position of Eclecticism on the Continent. But the eclectic spirit began to manifest itself in the early centuries of the Christian era "when the longing to arrive at the one explanation of all things, which had inspired the older Greek philosophers flagged and the belief that any such explanation was attainable began to fail. Men came to adopt from all systems the doctrine which best pleased them. Panaetius is one of the earliest instances of the modification of stoicism by the eclectic spirit. The same spirit was manifest among the Peripatetics. Philosophy was a secondary pursuit in Rome; naturally, therefore, the Roman thinkers for the most part were eclectic." A striking illustration is Cicero who borrowed from Stoicism, Peripatecism and the Scepticism of the Middle Academy. "The eclectics of modern philosophy are too numerous to name; Italian philosophers form a large proportion. Among the German Eclectics Wolf and his followers are mentioned and to some extent Schelling." Thus the peregrinations of the speculative mind caught in the circuit of the Eclectical spirit move on ceaselessly without a halt in spite of the fact that it has deservedly acquired a contemptuous significance partly because many eclectics are intellectual trimmers, sceptics or dilettanti. Also, Eclecticism is the result of a combination of principles of different and hostile theories, and must naturally end in an incoherent patchwork. "There can be no logical combination" remarks a writer on the subject whom I have quoted above in parts, "of elements from Christian ethics, with its divine sanction, and purely intuitional or evolutionary ethical theories, where the sanction is essentially different in quality." Whatever may be its value among the

thinkers in the West, it is admitted on all hands that it is a system of thought made up of views borrowed from various other systems.[1]

This much is enough about the eclectic system to mark out the difference in the basic approach to the ultimate problem in Philosophy between the West and ages-old India; and the latter's line of tackling the ultimate problem has been already indicated in explaining the position of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in its relation to modern thought as well as to the Wisdom of the mystics and sages of a dateless past. Nowadays, we hear occasionally the aggrieved moanings of patriot purists to the effect that Sri Aurobindo includes in his system many things which are not Indian, but which are either modern, or alien to the Indian philosophical systems. Here it must be stated Sri Aurobindo does not build his system on this ground or that, nor is it claimed for his system that it is partly Indian and partly modern or western, but it is a whole in itself both in theory and practice. For practice, his own personal testimony is the basis; for theory, his own intellectual adequacy is responsible for unearthing the forgotten truths and secrets buried alive in the Vedic texts primarily, and sifting the right and precious materials from other general scriptures of India. The spirit of his intellectual approach is that of the ancient seers and sages and thinkers of this land; this does not bind him to the orthodox notions of what an Indian system ought to be. From the beginning the West has had no opportunity of getting a glimpse into the basis, the direct perception or revelation that is fundamental to his system as to the earlier systems of Indian Philosophy. And as such, the West cannot be accused of or credited with claiming that Sri Aurobindo's system is modern and so western. All that has been done is that he has presented the whole problem and the solution in a language that the modern West can understand, appreciate, accept and even adopt in practice though with hesitancy due to difference in temperament and training, but which the representative section of decadent and fossilised

[1] How far Eclecticism has thriven on the Western soil and fulfilled the hopes raised of it as the sole solvent of the great problems of Philosophy I need not consider here. But it must be stated that an attempt was made in the last century here in India to build a system of Eclectic Theology and we know the result. Some notable stalwarts of Bengal sponsored the movement and later Keshab Sen gave a fillip to it by his orations with his standard of revolt raised against social evils and if there has been any modicum of success it is the social reform aspect of the movement. And spiritual seekers, men who were later recognised to be genuine spiritual figures left the Eclectic Theology started with the noble object of doing away with ignoble dogmas and blind worship. Of this Bijoy Goswami is a notable example.

India—not the renascent, rising and arisen India—in the purity of its ignorance, in its zeal to cling to forms and shells and rags could afford to call derisively modern, partly at least un-Indian or by any other name, not certainly *eclectic*. When all is said the fact remains, the Teaching is not for the West or East as such, or Indian orthodoxy or unorthodoxy. It is for Man wherever he be born, here, there or anywhere. When the light enters into dark chambers, its value is realised directly and not judged by referring to the whence of it. Nor do we think of Newton's Gravity as English Gravity, nor when we get oxygen tubes, we say this is American oxygen or German oxygen. But enough of examples. In this spirit, Sri Aurobindo's teaching is given to the world. Though it is not the exclusive monopoly of any country, it being Indian in its birth and substance and base, India has a better chance of benefiting by it in spite of any section that may act the brake in the rear van representing the atavistic forces in the movement of advanced thought and evolving Spirit.

Now I come to the critic's irrelevant remarks about the unsoundness of the theory of 'Emergent Evolution'. I did not use the term, it has a technical significance implying that it is distinct from 'Creative Evolution'. In the light of what I have stated about the theories and their use in general, I need not concern myself with the 'alternate theories' with which the critic professes to be conversant. The book takes the place of *Panchikarana* and similar *prakarana* treatises where the fundamental principles alone are stated, elucidated and dialectical warfare has no place. Reasonings and arguments in support of the system and demolishing other theories in order to establish itself have value and a place elsewhere, as in some of the *Vārtika* texts to which the critic alludes. In the scheme of such works as these in simple and lucid, almost self-explanatory lines, dialectics is grotesque and out of place.

On the point of this treatise being painted black as 'eclectic' I have to say this much: this treatise undertakes to show that the Creation by the Word, the Seven principles of Existence, the Seven Worlds and Planes and the Ladder of Existence are fundamental to Sri Aurobindo's system, and that these Principles are based upon truths arrived at by the ancients and are founded upon the spiritual and mystic experience of the Vedic seers, the sages and thinkers of the earlier Vedanta, and later popularised to a certain extent by the Puranas in their usual gross fashion. For this purpose reconciliation was effected between the sevenfold principle of the Rig Veda and the Purana on the one hand, and the fivefold principle of some of

the Upanishads and at the same time was explained the triple formula of Sat-chit-ananda as answering to the Uncreate Higher-half, *parārdha*, of the sevenfold existence. The treatise in the opening verses assumed as incontrovertible the fact of the Creation of the world of objects, *artha*, by the Word, *shabda*, as an essential truth of the Vedic and Tantric (*āgamic*) lines of thought. In all this I followed in the footsteps of Sri Aurobindo whose references to these texts are scattered over a number of works including *The LifeDivine*. Any one who has had a 'glimpse of the Life Divine' could find that the mottoes selected for the chapters in *The Life Divine* are taken from the sacred texts of ancient India—the Rig Veda, the Upanishads, the Gita and occasionally from the Puranas and even from some of the celebrated treatises of latter day Acharyas. The chapters on the Order of the Worlds, those on the Sevenfold Existence and one or two other chapters have for their mottoes verses from the Rig Veda, lines from the Mundaka and other Upanishads, which all put in a nutshell the substance of these chapters. And sheer common sense—not loud learning—is enough to show that these are not given in an eclectic spirit, but in a large all-embracing spirit which incidentally throws light on the wisdom of the ancients whose origins are revealed in the Rig Veda; and it is essentially—not always in details and imagery and occult means used by the mystics—preserved in the profound texts of the Upanishads and later in the Tantras, but eventually gets more and more covered and veiled in the Puranas where encrustation reaches its acme of obscuration. One who does not know or care to know that the pristine source of Indian Theological traditions is to be found in the Vedas, at least can be partly traced to the Vedas and later to the Agamas, will certainly be at a loss to appreciate the fact that some Puranic texts can be directly traced to the Rig Veda, even so the Upanishads, and the occult truths embedded in the Tantras of the Shaiva, Shakta and Vaishnava.

The critic thinks that the imagery of the Ladder of Existence has nothing to do with any Indian Theology. But the imagery is not my invention. Sri Aurobindo discovered it, but the real Seer-poet who used the figure is a Rig Vedic Seer, thousands of years ago, who says that the seers climbed Indra like a ladder. And in the same opening hymns of the first Book it is further amplified by the statement that the sages journeyed upwards from 'plateau to plateau' or from 'peak to peak'. The ascent by steps, *sopāna āroha*, used in the Purana and the Tantra can be plainly traced to the Truth-vision of Seer Madhuchhandas.

This much I have stated on the legitimate assumption that there may be on the critic's part a genuine misunderstanding or ununderstanding of the nature of Indian Theologies of any persuasion and its relation to Sri Aurobindo's system.

Before closing, it must be stated that this review is no criticism of a genuine critic, it is a wordy pugilism of an objectionable sort, of an irresponsible brood. If hostile criticism can have any sound value, it must be criticism, it must recognise and state the claim of the book, not necessarily to accept it, and in exposing any weakness it must observe certain modes of etiquette, must make at least an effort at measure, sanity, justice. Here is the prefatory Note which mentions that years ago the Master after keeping the Mss. for some time with him gave his word of approval and blessings for appending it to the '*Four Powers of the Mother*' (in Sanskrit), but the verdict of the critic ignores this fact and audaciously passes the unreasoning and malafide sentence of the removal of this book from the list of works dedicated to the service of the Master and his Teachings. At the close of the book, it is clearly stated that this treatise is arc-like, and compared to a *tanvi*, which simile is explained, in order to show that these seventy verses in a compact mould would be sufficient to give an adequate idea of the whole system. The dry-as-dust intellectual formalism and dialectical battle were purposely avoided as that would be incongruous and out of place in the scheme of the work and defeat its purpose, which like the slender figure of the fair sex, is to be pleasing and attractive to the reader. Notwithstanding statements to this effect, the critic ignoring or seeming to ignore the point of view of the author of the work, goes on delivering a deathblow to a caricatured effigy of the substance of the book and utters the final word—the ultimate *mantra* for its last journey to the delectation of his own self at least and to the pleasure of those who engaged him to undertake this task. It must be added that it is the sureness of fire-eating instinct that impels him in his scornful temper to a callous temerity of judgement on things which he cannot approach with sympathy of mind and intellectual and spiritual straightforwardness. It is this that has succeeded in pulling down to the common passion-level whatever higher faculties of mind, and general learning and culture he may have developed or acquired—and this is quite manifest in his pronouncement that this book is a 'pointless disservice' made with an air of obviousness in a rude, censorious and inimical tone.

There is an element of irony here. The Journal that has given quarter to this attack gave a very welcome review to this very work when it appeared

in print some ten years ago. But times have changed. It is a good luck of all concerned that learned minds of a crude type were not serviceable as reviewers to the Journal at that time.

One word more. The only unprejudiced statement of fact which this reviewer makes as a tribute at the altar of untarnished truth is that the author is an accredited disciple of Sri Aurobindo. Here also I suspect that the 'accredited' is meant to bring into bold relief his own performance and thus to enhance his value to those who are responsible for his envenomed pen which in a single page has covered a multitude of sins of commission and omission by the author. When I find that the critic is not an ignoramus, but a learned mind though unfortunately given to pugilistic habits, I am reminded of Dr. Johnson saying, 'Why, Sir, a man who talks nonsense so well must know that he is talking nonsense.'

T. V. KAPALI SASTRY

# THE MEETING OF THE EAST AND THE WEST IN SRI AUROBINDO'S PHILOSOPHY

*(Concluded from the last issue)*

## (2) ILLUSTRATION FROM THE PROBLEM OF YOGA

WHEN we come to the problem of Yoga, the relative positions of the East and the West are reversed. In the problem of evolution it was the West which was leading. In the East, as we have just seen, there was not much interest in the problem. But it is just the reverse when we come to the problem of Yoga. Here the lead is definitely with the East. Not that the West has not shown any interest in it. To say this will be to ignore the valuable work of the Christian mystics of the Middle Ages who spent their whole lives in search of Divine Illumination. But on the whole the tradition of the West is against this. It is just the reverse, however, in our country. Here religion, philosophy, social customs all encourage the individual in seeking personal communion with God. Yoga or the method of raising individual consciousness to a higher level with a view to realizing the Divine, is universally acclaimed by all our cultural institutions as the supreme end of life. Of course, opinions have varied widely as to what the nature of Yoga is, but there is practical unanimity about the value of Yoga as a means to the attainment of the highest end of the individual. Whether the Yoga is a *Jnāna-Yoga* or a *Karma-Yoga* or a *Bhakti-Yoga*, the end is the realization by the individual of his personal salvation. Another thing which all the different Yogas emphasize is that the attainment of the object of Yoga is only possible through the suppression of the lower activities. The definition of Yoga given by Patanjali: "*yogaśchittavrittinirodhah*" (Yoga is the suppression of mental activity) emphasizes the need of the suppression of the lower forms of consciousness in order that the higher may emerge. The Gita, although its standpoint is very different from that of Patanjali, yet looks upon Yoga as a means to the realization of individual salvation. It does not

regard any particular method of Yoga as the only true method but gives certain general characteristics of all Yogas, which reduce themselves to one fundamental characteristic, namely, non-attachment to objects. It also stresses the fundamental object of all Yogas, which, according to it, is the union of the individual soul with God. But in spite of all these differences, it shares with the Yoga of Patanjali and others the view that Yoga is a method of obtaining individual salvation. It, however, does not accept the standpoint of Patanjali's Yoga that Yoga means the suppression of all mental activity. It is impossible for it, in view of its catholic outlook, to accept this standpoint. Instead of the suppression of mental activity, it enjoins the bringing of it under the control of the Self (*Gita*, VI. 26). But it does not envisage the possibility of a transformation of it by the light of a higher consciousness.

Sri Aurobindo makes a revolutionary change in the conception of Yoga. He rejects the idea, to which all the previous thinkers have held fast, namely, that the object of Yoga is individual salvation. Against this view runs his clear declaration: "Our Yoga is not for ourselves but for humanity". Lest people should mistake this view for the Western brand of humanism, he adds: "Our Yoga is not for ourselves but for the Divine". As Sri Nolini Kanta Gupta has pointed out,[1] there is no inconsistency in the two statements, but the two together bring out the full meaning of his Yoga. That is to say, his Yoga is for the expression of the Divine in humanity. Sri Aurobindo may also be called a humanist, but his humanism is totally different from the European brand of humanism of Comte and Mill. For Sri Aurobindo the goal of humanity is Divinity. Nothing short of the Divine status can really satisfy mankind. It is an insult to humanity to suggest, as the Western humanists do, that man can ever be satisfied with the picture of ideal human society that they present to us. God forbid that mankind should ever descend so low as to accept it as its ultimate goal! The aim of Sri Aurobindo's Yoga is what may be called cosmic salvation, that is to say, the Divinization of the whole of mankind, leading ultimately to the Divinization of the whole universe, for even the physical universe must feel the thrill of a Divine life. Individual salvation, meaning freedom from the cycle of birth and death, is not for Sri Aurobindo a very great thing. Of far greater importance is a higher birth, a birth as a Divinized Being. Such a higher birth is envisaged in the famous verse of the Isha Upanishad:

[1] Nolini Kanta Gupta, *The Yoga of Sri Aurobindo*, 1st edn., p. 11

"He who knows That as both in one, the Birth and the dissolution of Birth, by the dissolution crosses beyond death and by the Birth enjoys Immortality"[1]—(Sri Aurobindo's translation).

This verse, we may say in passing, is one of the most difficult in the whole range of the Upanishads and has proved a stumbling-block to generations of Indian scholars before Sri Aurobindo. Not one of them has been able to understand its meaning. If what they have understood to be its purport is to be taken seriously, then the sage or sages whose revelations are recorded in this Upanishad must be pronounced to be absolute fools. It was left to the genius of Sri Aurobindo to discover the hidden meaning of this verse, which had remained a mystery for so many ages. And the meaning which he has brought out is so clear and so much in consonance with the spirit of this Upanishad, that there can be no doubt about the correctness of it. Now Sri Aurobindo interprets this verse as follows:

"....we are intended to realize immortality in the Birth. The self is uniform and undying and in itself always possesses immortality. It does not need to descend into Avidya and Birth to get that immortality of Non-Birth; for it possesses it always. It descends in order to realise and possess it as the individual Brahman in the play of world-existence. It accepts Birth and Death, assumes the ego and then dissolving the ego by the recovery of unity realises itself as the Lord, the One, and Birth as only a becoming of the Lord in mental and formal being; this becoming is now governed by the true sight of the Seer and, once this is done, becoming is no longer inconsistent with Being, birth becomes a means and not an obstacle to the enjoyment of immortality by the lord of this formal habitation. This is our proper course and not to remain for ever in the chain of birth and death, nor to flee from birth into a pure becoming. The bondage does not consist in the physical act of becoming, but in the persistence of the ignorant sense of the separate ego. The Mind creates the chain and not the body."[2]

Another radical change which Sri Aurobindo introduces into the conception of Yoga is that he rejects the older view and declares that it does not

[1] संभूतिञ्च विनाशञ्च यस्तद्वेदोभयं सह।
विनाशेन मृत्युं तीर्त्वा सम्भूत्यामृतमश्नुते ॥

[2] Sri Aurobindo, *Isha Upanishad*, p. 119

mean the suppression of the lower forms of consciousness. In fact, if the higher consciousness merely touches the higher parts of our being but does not illumine our mind or our vital parts or the physical side of our being, then there is no Yoga. Yoga means the transformation of the whole of our being, spiritual, mental, vital and physical, and unless this takes place, Yoga cannot be said to be complete. So far we have not spoken of our inner being, our *chaitya purusha*, as Sri Aurobindo calls it. Yoga must touch this also. It must bring the higher light to play upon this inner being also and make the light of this inner being illumine our surface consciousness.

This process of transformation of individual consciousness has its significance not only for the individual life, but it has a cosmic significance also. In fact, for Sri Aurobindo its main significance is cosmic. It is the necessary preparation for the descent of the Higher Light from above. Unless the *ādhāra* or receptacle is made fit for its reception, the Higher Light from the Divine Source cannot descend. The function of individual Yoga is to prepare the *ādhāra* and prepare it for a cosmic purpose, namely, that the Divine Consciousness may descend in the form of Supermind into Earth-Consciousness. It must be remembered that the Divine Consciousness does not descend into a vacuum but only into human consciousness, from where it spreads to other parts of the world, till the whole universe is Divinised. This is why it is so necessary to prepare human consciousness so that it may become a fit receptacle for the Supermind. Unless this is done, the Supramental Consciousness will not descend. This is the function of the individual Yoga. But its aim is not the attainment of individual salvation but the Divinization of the whole universe. Individual Yoga, therefore, is only a prelude to Cosmic Yoga or the process of the Divinization of the entire universe. In Sri Aurobindo's conception of Yoga, therefore, the Western cosmic standpoint finds its fulfilment, along with our Indian spiritual outlook.

### (3) ILLUSTRATION FROM THE PROBLEM OF REALITY

I now come to the last part of my task, which is to show how the Western and Indian conceptions of Reality find their fulfilment in Sri Aurobindo.

There are two main standpoints with regard to the nature of Reality, namely, the existential and the axiological. The West, as I have already shown, has mainly favoured the existential, and India the axiological standpoint. From the existential point of view, the most essential characteristic of Reality is its objectivity, its independence of subjective sensations and

feelings. The axiological point of view, on the other hand, stresses the fact that Reality is Content or Value. The existential point of view is mainly theoretical, because it is not interested in the problems of practical life, which are the problems of attaining content or value. The axiological standpoint, on the other hand, is chiefly interested in practical life; in fact, it converts the theoretical into the practical, because it sees no reality in a thing which does not possess a value. From its point of view, even knowledge is practical, for it also means acquiring a value.

There are other consequential differences. The existential standpoint aligns itself very much to the logical or intellectual standpoint, because logic also takes an objective and impersonal standpoint. It also joins itself to the empirical standpoint, because the empirical standpoint is also objective, although it takes the perceptual and not the intellectual viewpoint. There has often been a quarrel between the advocates of the empirical and those of the intellectual standpoint, as happened in Europe in the controversy between Locke and the rationalists, but this is a quarrel between two members of the same order, for both the contending parties adopted the existential standpoint. The quarrel is different, however, between the rationalists and the romanticists, when the latter wanted to lead a revolt, from the side of Value, against the excessive intellectualism or logicism of Hegel. Although Hegel's standpoint itself was on the borderland between existentialism and axiologism, yet the romanticists were not satisfied, and even now the fight between the romanticists and the rationalists is going on. The enormous growth of Science during the last few centuries has also added considerable strength to the existential standpoint. That is why the present philosophical position in the West is predominantly existential.

The highest conception of Reality which the genius of India could evolve was the conception of it as Sachchidananda. As I have already remarked, it is the greatest single achievement of Indian philosophy. It brings out clearly the relation between Existence and Value by showing that Existence itself is a Value. Likewise it shows that Reason itself is a Value, being what we call the logical value. But the highest value is of course the spiritual value, which is indicated by bliss, and this is revealed by intuition. From the point of view of the nature of consciousness through which these values are respectively obtained, we have here a hierarchical gradation from perception to reason and from reason to intuition.

For Sri Aurobindo what philosophy requires is a synthesis between the existential or objective, and the value or spiritual standpoint. As he has

said,[1] "...the objective assumes value only as it has a relation to the soul; it is a field, an occasion, a means for the soul's progression in Time: the objective is created as a ground of manifestation for the subjective. The objective world is only an outward form of becoming of the spirit; it is here a first form, a basis, but it is not the essential thing, the main truth of being. The subjective and objective are two necessary sides of the manifested reality and of equal value, and in the range of the objective itself the supra-physical object of consciousness has as much right to acceptance as the physical objectivity; it cannot be *à priori* set aside as a subjective delusion or hallucination."

The conception of Sachchidananda no doubt synthesizes these two standpoints. But it is important to understand the full significance of this conception. The usual mistake which has been committed by our thinkers is to take Chit, the second component of this conception, as static consciousness, thereby making impossible a real self-projection of the Absolute. This is the origin of the Mayavada. Not finding any means of reconciling the idea of a pure static consciousness going out of itself to create the world, the Mayavadins looked upon the whole creation as unreal. This difficulty is removed if Chit or Consciousness is understood as meaning not Consciousness alone, but also Shakti or Force. But it is necessary to bear in mind that this Shakti is not a separate power, not something which has got a coercive force upon the Absolute, but is inherent in the nature of the Absolute itself. To quote Sri Aurobindo: "...Force is inherent in Existence. Shiva and Kali, Brahman and Shakti are one and not two who are separable. Force inherent in existence may be at rest or it may be in motion, but when it is at rest, it exists none the less, and is not abolished, diminished or in any way essentially altered....But since Force is thus inherent in existence and it is the nature of Force to have this double or alternative possibility of rest and movement, that is to say, of self-concentration and self-diffusion in Force, the question of the how of the movement, its possibility, initiating impulsion or impelling cause does not arise."[2] The question of the 'how' of Shakti being eliminated, there remains the question of its 'why'. "Why should this possibility of a play of movement of Force translate itself at all? Why should not Force of Existence remain eternally concentrated in itself, infinite, free from all variation and formation?" Sri Aurobindo rejects the solution of the

[1] *The Life Divine*, 1939 edn., Vol. II, Part II, pp. 539-40
[1] *The Life Divine* 1939 edn., Vol. I, pp. 125-26

Mayavadins and the Tantriks who assert that Sachchidananda is subject to the control of Force, compelled by it and without option as to whether it shall manifest in the universe or remain unmanifest. His Sachchidananda is very different from this. As he puts it, "In a conscious existence which is absolute, independent of its formations, not determined by its works, we must suppose an inherent freedom to manifest or not to manifest the potentiality of movement. A Brahman compelled by Prakriti is not Brahman, but an inert Infinite with an active content in it more powerful than the continent, a conscious holder of Force of whom his Force is master". For Sri Aurobindo Sachchidananda is the master of Force and not Force the master of Sachchidananda. The superiority of Sri Aurobindo's position here we realize very well, when we compare it, for example, with that of Kashmir Shaivism which is a pure form of monism. The manifestation of Shiva in the universe takes place in this philosophy through 36 *tattvas* or principles. The highest *tattva* is Shivatattva, which describes the pure nature of Shiva, called Parama Shiva, before his manifestation in the universe. He manifests himself in the universe, in order that the ignorant individual souls may through his grace obtain union with him and thus be delivered for ever from the bondage of innumerable births and deaths. The next *tattva* is Shaktitattva, where it is stated that Parama Shiva manifests through a Shakti in association with a pure *māyā*, called *shuddhamaya*. From the Shaktitattva arises the *Sadaśivatattva* or the *Sadakhyatattva*, and from that the *Maheśvaratattva*, and so on. Once the manifestation of Shiva takes place, the whole process is under the control of Shakti, Shiva remaining absolutely inert. Thus, in spite of its absolute monism, Kashmir Shaivism has to accept the view that so far as his manifestation in the universe goes, Shiva is absolutely under the control of Shakti. The southern form of Shaivism, known as Shaivism of the *Shaiva Siddhanta*, does not differ from the Kashmir Shaivism on the nature of the thirty-six *tattvas*. Its differences lie elsewhere, chiefly in its view of salvation and the relation of the individual souls to Shiva, where it takes a standpoint closely akin to that of *Rāmānuja*.[1]

Sri Aurobindo's standpoint, therefore, differs very much from that of Shaivism, either of the northern or of the southern form on the question of the relation between the Absolute and its Shakti. Sri Birendra Kishore Roy-Chowdhury has pointed out this difference very tersely as follows: "Parama

[1] Article *Saivism* (Encyclopaedia of Religion & Ethics). See also Suryanarayana Sastri's article on *The Philosophy of Saivism* (*The Cultural Heritage of India*, Vol. II)

Shiva of Tantra is for ever absorbed in Samadhi, he has no will of manifestation; it is Adya Shakti who is the cause of manifestation and withdrawal from manifestation, of *srishti* and *laya*. But the Purushottama of Sri Aurobindo is not merely Shiva absorbed in the Samadhi of Sachchidananda, he has a cosmic will, the will of manifestation; he has an alert eye on all the play of Adya Shakti. Sri Aurobindo does not accept the corpse-like Shiva of the Tantriks who lies under the feet of Shakti; his Shiva is the ever-awake Godhead of the dual Shiva-Durga of Tantra; the Divine Mother is the embodied will of that Purushottama".[1]

## CONCLUSION: SRI AUROBINDO AND FUTURE PHILOSOPHY

I conclude this rather long paper by pointing out that what Sri Aurobindo has given us is what I may call an outline of future philosophy. From what he has told us about what he has called future poetry, we can form an idea of what in his view future philosophy will be. The *mantra*, he has pointed out, represents the ideal towards which poetry is moving, but which poetry has yet to attain. Poetry is an incomplete *mantra*. The *mantra* differs from a verse in the fact that in it there is not only a realization of the ideal of beauty but there is something more. This something more it is difficult to describe, but we feel it none the less, rather we intuit it. There is mingled with aesthetic satisfaction here a satisfaction of a deeper kind, a satisfaction which touches the very core of our being. There is a thrill, an upsurge of the whole consciousness, culminating in a readiness to surrender our whole being to the illimitable vastnesses that slowly open out before our gaze. It is something like this thrill which Faust must have felt, as described by Goethe, when, after contemplating the grandeur of Nature, he exclaimed, 'Welch' Schauspiel! aber ach! ein Schauspiel nur!" ("What a show! but alas, only a show!"). He called it a show, because he could not bring it into relationship with himself, so big was the gap between the grandeur and sublimity of Nature and the ugliness and meanness of the world of man. Sri K. D. Sethna[2] has tried to give some idea of the nature of this thrill, when he says, "The vision, the word, the vibration—all three must be intensities drawn from the Spirit's ether. But even

[1] Article on *Sri Aurobindo and the Tantra*, by B. K. Roy Chowdhury (Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual, 1942).

[2] Article on *Sri Aurobindo—Poet of Yoga* by Sri K. D. Sethna (Sri Aurobindo Mandir Annual 1942, p. 217)

more than the wide inwardness of the vision, the mighty yet intimate grip of the word, it is the rhythm that marks the Mantra, bearing as it does the precise thrill of a Consciousness which is everlasting and unlimited. Without such a thrill there would be just a distant glimpse of the Promised Land in admirable poetry of its own kind but no sensation of the Spirit's vastnesses as though they were within us. For that sensation and the concrete insight it brings, the mind must surrender its tongue to the luminous Beyond instead of essaying an imitation by means of its own heat and movement. To do this in any extensive measure calls for a patient and quiet aesthetic Yoga in tune with an actual practice of self-consecration to the Divine. Even then, what is achieved may not be the utter Mantra, for there are fine gradations, each a power of the Spirit and the sheer top is a mantric miracle".

May we not say that just as what this writer calls an aesthetic yoga converts the poetic verse into a *mantra*, so there is a philosophic yoga which converts the philosophies with which we are familiar, into the ideal philosophy, the philosophy that is to be, the future philosophy! An outline of this philosophic yoga Sri Aurobindo has given in his writings. This future philosophy will touch the whole of our being and not a part of it. It will not speak merely to our spirit or address our intellect or touch the sensuous part of our life, but it will have contact with the whole of our personality. Is it too much to hope that the East and the West will join hands here and work it out on the lines so clearly indicated by Sri Aurobindo? That is the consummation which Sri Aurobindo desired, and that is the true message of his philosophy.

S. K. MAITRA

# REVIEW

**Indian Philosophy**. *By Dr. C. D. Sharma*. Publishers: Nandkishore & Bros., Banaras. Price. Rs. 12-8

Dr. C. D. Sharma's recently published book *Indian Philosophy* supplies a need which has been felt very much by our university students as well as foreigners, of a book on Indian philosophy which is neither too elementary nor too comprehensive, like the works of Drs. Radhakrishnan and S.N. Dasgupta. It gives all the essential features of the different systems of Indian philosophy, expressed in very clear language, without going too much into details. In fact, clearness of exposition is one of the chief merits of the book; there is no vagueness to be found anywhere in it. At the same time the author has not sacrificed breadth and comprehensiveness for the sake of lucidity. All the chapters are thorough, and the accounts of the different systems dealt with in them are quite adequate. Where all the chapters are excellent, it is difficult to pick out any for specific mention. Yet we may say that the author is at his best in the chapters on Buddhism and on *Shankara* and *post-Shankara Vedānta*.

In the chapter on *Shunyavāda* the author has taken great pains to show that the usual view of it as Nihilism is quite wrong. To quote his own words: "Shunyavadins call themselves Madhyamikas or followers of the Middle Path realised by Buddha during his Enlightenment, which Path, avoiding the errors of existence and non-existence, affirmation and negation, eternalism and nihilism, also at once transcends both the extremes. It is a great irony of fate that the followers of such a path are condemned by some as nihilists. Unfortunately the word 'Shunya' has been grossly misunderstood. The literal meaning of the word which is negation or void has been the cause of much misunderstanding. The word is used by the Madhyamikas in a different philosophical sense. Ignoring the real philosophical meaning of the 'Shunya' and taking it only in its literal sense, many thinkers, eastern and western, ancient, mediaeval and modern, have unfortunately committed that horrible blunder which has led them to thoroughly mis-

understand Shunyavada and to condemn it as hopeless scepticism and self-contained nihilism" (p. 108).

So also in the chapter on *Vijnānavāda* he has very clearly shown that *Vijnānavāda* is not Subjectivism but Absolutism. Thus, referring to the *Lankāvatāra Sūtra*, he says (p. 145), "Though sometimes the *Lankāvatāra* appears to support the doctrine of crude Subjectivism, yet really it is pregnant with deeper expressions which forbid us to draw such a conclusion. The external world is the creation, not of the individual consciousness or mind (Manas, Chitta or Vijnana) but of the Absolute Consciousness (*Alaya* or *Tathāgatagarbha*). The confusion arises on account of the loose use of the words 'Manas', 'Chitta' and 'Vijnana' by the Lankavatara". So again, at p. 146 he says, "It is generally believed that *Alayavijnāna* is an ever-changing stream of consciousness. But in the Lankavatara it is said to be a *permanent immortal and never-changing storehouse of Consciousness*". The *Alaya-vijnāna*, therefore, of the *Vijnānavāda* resembles very closely the *Atman* of the *Vedānta*. In fact, the *Sunyavāda* and the *Vijnānavāda* both closely resemble the *Vedānta*, as the author has pointed out at pp. 454-455 and also in the chapter on Buddhism and Vedanta.

The accounts of *Shankara* and *post-Shankara Vedānta* are also very thorough and supported by profuse quotations from texts. In fact, all through the book the author has taken great pains to support all his statements by elaborate quotations from the original texts. This constitutes another chief merit of the book.

The author has included a short account of the philosophy of Sri Aurobindo in the chapter on *Other Schools of Vedānta*. Justifying the inclusion of Sri Aurobindo's philosophy in this chapter, he says, "The justification for including Sri Aurobindo's philosophy under 'The Schools of Vedanta', if any justification were required, is that almost every page of 'The Life Divine' is surcharged with the creative vision of the seers of the Vedas and the sages of the Upanishads. Sri Aurobindo deserves to be placed by the side of the great Acharyas of the Vedanta, like Shankara, Ramanuja, Madhva, Vallabha and Nimbarka" (p. 148). It would have been better, however, if he could have devoted a separate chapter to it.

So also it is to be regretted that he has not been able to devote a separate chapter to the great Bhakti movement. Especially is it to be regretted that there is no separate account of the *Bhāgavata* in the book.

But these are minor defects, and they do not in any way take from the great excellence of the book. In fact, we have no hesitation in saying that

it is a work of outstanding merit and will be found extremely useful by our university students and by all who want a clear and accurate statement of the main doctrines of the different schools of Indian philosophy which is not overburdened with too much detail. The book deserves to have a wide sale, not only in our country but also abroad.

S. K. MAITRA

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